WHEN GRETEL WAS FIFTEEN

NINA RHOADES

AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

WHEN GRETEL WAS FIFTEEN

BOOKS BY NINA RHOADES

MARION'S VACATION. Illustrated. Cloth. $1.75
DOROTHY BROWN. Illustrated. Cloth. $1.75
VICTORINE'S BOOK. Illustrated. Cloth. $1.75
THE GIRL FROM ARIZONA. Illustrated. $1.75
THE INDEPENDENCE OF NAN. Illustrated. $1.75

FOR YOUNGER READERS

"THE BRICK HOUSE BOOKS"

The sight of the brick house on the cover makes girl readers happy at once. — *Indianapolis News.*

Illustrated. Large 12mo. Cloth. $1.50 each.

ONLY DOLLIE
THE LITTLE GIRL NEXT DOOR
WINIFRED'S NEIGHBORS
THE CHILDREN ON THE TOP FLOOR
HOW BARBARA KEPT HER PROMISE
LITTLE MISS ROSAMOND
PRISCILLA OF THE DOLL SHOP
BRAVE LITTLE PEGGY
THE OTHER SYLVIA
MAISIE'S MERRY CHRISTMAS
LITTLE QUEEN ESTHER
MAKING MARY LIZZIE HAPPY
A REAL CINDERELLA
NORA'S TWIN SISTER
FOUR GIRLS OF FORTY YEARS AGO

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.
BOSTON

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

https://archive.org/details/whengretelwasfif00byni

MORE THAN ONE PAIR OF EYES LOOKED AFTER HER CURIOUSLY.
Page 20.

WHEN GRETEL WAS FIFTEEN

By

NINA RHOADES

ILLUSTRATED BY

ELIZABETH WITHINGTON

BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

Published, August, 1921

HV2335
R
copy 1

Copyright, 1921,
By Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co.

All rights reserved

When Gretel Was Fifteen

Norwood Press
BERWICK & SMITH CO.
Norwood, Mass.
U. S. A.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Girls at Miss Minton's	9
II.	Easter in War Time	32
III.	Breaking-Up Day	49
IV.	Fräulein Sieling Makes a Call	68
V.	Off for New London	92
VI.	At the Chesters'	111
VII.	Gretel Meets an Old Friend	133
VIII.	Ada Expresses an Opinion	154
IX.	The Dance on the Fourth	177
X.	The Summons	197
XI.	Gretel Proves Her Loyalty	214
XII.	Lost	234
XIII.	Suspense	260
XIV.	Found	286
XV.	Safe at Home	309

ILLUSTRATIONS

More than one pair of eyes looked after her curiously . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Gretel could not help noticing that the young man was regarding her in a rather peculiar manner . . . 144

Gretel put out a detaining hand . . 168

If he recognized her, he made not the slightest sign 192

"I believe you are to be trusted in so far as that" 224

Of course the two girls had a great deal to say to each other 314

When Gretel Was Fifteen

CHAPTER I

THE GIRLS AT MISS MINTON'S

"WAR has been declared."

Miss Minton's hand trembled slightly, as she laid down the evening paper, but otherwise she showed no sign of unusual emotion. There was a moment of dead silence, and every face grew suddenly grave. They all knew what it meant, those twelve pupils, and five teachers, seated at Miss Minton's long supper table. For nearly three years this terrible thing called war had been devastating Europe, bringing pain and misery to millions of once happy homes. And now their own country was to cast in her lot with the Allies, in the great fight for humanity. It was the first time

in the twenty years and more, during which Miss Minton had been the mistress of her small school for girls, that that lady had ever been known to look at a newspaper at meal time, but to-night she had left instructions that the paper should be brought to her the moment it arrived. For weeks every one had been expecting the war cloud to burst, and yet now that it had happened, they were all conscious of a certain shock. Amy Bowring began to cry.

"My brother will have to go," she sobbed; "he was at Plattsburg all last summer. Oh, it's dreadful. I don't see why the President didn't prevent it."

Ada Godfrey's black eyes flashed indignantly. Her uncle had gone down on the *Lusitania.*

"I'm glad he didn't prevent it," she said. "We ought to have gone in two years ago. It's time those Germans learned they don't own the whole world."

"Ada," said Miss Minton, reprovingly, and she glanced down the long table to where little

Fräulein Sieling, the German teacher, sat next to Gretel Schiller. Ada bit her lip, and she, too, glanced at the only two people among them all to whom Germany meant more than a name. Fräulein had grown very pale, and there was a frightened look in her blue eyes, but she was buttering a muffin with apparent calmness. Gretel Schiller had flushed, and her lips were quivering. Gretel's father had been a famous German pianist, and although he had died several years before, and Gretel was living with an American half-brother and his wife, and was in every way quite as much an American herself as any of them, they all knew that she worshipped her father's memory.

"You remember the Civil War, don't you, Miss Minton?" Grace Moss asked, by way of steering the conversation into smoother waters. Grace was one of the oldest pupils in the school, and felt privileged to ask questions.

"Yes," answered Miss Minton, with a sigh. "I was only a child, but I remember many things about that time. My eldest brother was killed at Gettysburg. Amy, if you can't

control yourself, you will have to leave the table."

Miss Minton was always stern, but her tone was kinder than her words, and Amy made an effort to check her sobs, and go on with her supper.

"Do you remember the Civil War, too, Miss Laura?" Geraldine Barlow inquired of Miss Laura, Miss Minton's younger sister, who sat at the other end of the table.

"No, dear, I was too young. My sister is ten years older than I. I think she is the only person here who has any memory of what real war is like. Of course there was the little war with Spain, twenty years ago, but that was so quickly over."

"Perhaps this war will be over quickly, too, now that America has gone in," said Angel Thayer, who always looked on the bright side of things. "I don't believe the Germans can hold out much longer. Perhaps they will give in, and ask for peace before our boys get over."

"Not much hope of that," said Margaret May. "My father writes that Germany is ter-

ribly strong still. He ought to know something about it, for he has been working in the French hospitals for over a year." Margaret spoke confidently. She was very proud of that father of hers, the poor country doctor, who had left his practice at home, and gone to tend the wounded boys in France.

At that moment Fräulein pushed back her chair from the table. "May I be pardoned if I go to my room?" she asked in her slow, careful English, and she cast an appealing glance at Miss Minton. "I have a very bad headache."

"Certainly," said Miss Minton, kindly, and as the little German teacher hurriedly left the room, she added in a reproachful tone to Ada:

"I am afraid you have hurt Fräulein's feelings, Ada. It is not her fault that her country is at war with us."

Gretel's grave face brightened, and she gave Miss Minton a grateful glance.

"Fräulein is very unhappy," she said, impulsively. "This dreadful war has almost broken her heart."

"A pity it did not break it altogether," muttered Madame, the French teacher, but she did not speak loud enough to be heard by either of the Mintons, for quarrels between different nationalities were strictly forbidden in the school.

Gretel saw Madame's expression, even though she did not hear her words, and a shadow crept into her brown eyes. She was very fond of Fräulein, who, for more than a year now, had been the only person to whom she could talk freely of her father's memory, and of her happy childhood, which had been spent in the big, shabby studio, among his German friends. Indeed, Fräulein was the only German she knew, for since she had gone to live with her American relatives, she had quite lost trace of all her father's friends. Her brother and his wife were very good to her, and she loved them dearly, but those old memories were very tender ones, and so when, a year and a half ago, she had come to Miss Minton's, a rather shy, quiet little girl of thirteen, it was not strange that her heart

should have gone out to the sentimental little German teacher, who talked to her in her father's language, and seemed to understand her as few people had done. Those were the early days of the war, when many Americans still tried to be neutral, and Gretel's family had made no objections, when, in the holidays, she had asked to invite Fräulein to their home. She had even gone to tea with Fräulein, at her aunt's apartment. But as the months passed, things changed; feeling against Germany grew stronger, and on her last visit Gretel had heard remarks made by Fräulein's aunt, that had brought the hot, indignant blood into her cheeks. Still, she had remained faithful in her affection for her friend, arguing that, after all, if people were Germans it was natural they should refuse to believe evil of their country. She tried to picture herself in Fräulein's place, a stranger in a strange land, and she felt sure that whatever people had said against America, she should still have loved her country, and been loyal to her.

And now America was actually at war with

Germany, and things would necessarily grow more difficult. Gretel's face was very grave and troubled when, some fifteen minutes later, they all rose from the supper table, and filed out of the dining-room. Her first thought was to go to Fräulein, and try to comfort her. It was Good Friday, and there would be no more lessons till the following Tuesday. The girls had the evening to themselves, and could do what they chose till bedtime.

As soon as they had left the dining-room Amy began to cry again, and Angel Thayer, too, who was her room-mate, and best friend, slipped an arm about her tenderly.

"Don't cry, Amy," she soothed. "Perhaps the war will be over before your brother gets there. Miss Minton says most of the boys will have to be trained in this country before they are sent overseas."

"I only wish I had a brother to go," proclaimed Ada Godfrey. "I would be proud to give him to my country."

"You wouldn't if he were the only brother you had in the world," objected Amy, with a

sob. "It's all very well to talk when you haven't any brothers, and your father's dead. There isn't a soul in your family to go."

"It wouldn't make any difference if I had only one man relative in the world," declared Ada, heroically. "I should be proud to send him to the war, even if I knew positively he would be killed the next month. We ought to glory in making sacrifices. Think what the English and French have done. My aunt, who is doing war work in England, says there is scarcely a family that hasn't lost at least one member. Oh, I wish those horrid Germans were all ——" Ada checked herself abruptly, for Miss Minton was still within hearing distance.

Every face grew grave. This idea of sacrifice for their country was a new one to most of them. So far, Margaret May was the only girl at Miss Minton's to whom war had meant anything more than a name. But now —— Even Angel's bright smile faded, as she suddenly remembered that her father, whom she

adored, was still a young man. Was it possible that fathers as well as brothers might be called upon to join the colors?

"I can't help being glad my brothers are little boys," said Molly Chester, with a catch in her voice. "Father's nearly fifty, so of course he's too old. I'm afraid I'm selfish, but it is a great comfort."

"Both my brothers will go," said Olive Gerard, quietly. "I am glad to have them, but of course it's going to be hard for Mother and me." Olive was seventeen; a tall girl, with a sweet face, and gentle gray eyes. She was a great favorite with the younger pupils, who all looked up to her and admired her very much, and instinctively both Amy and Angel drew a little closer to her, and Amy slipped a trembling hand into hers.

"I wish I could be brave," she whispered, "but I know I am an awful coward. Jack always told me I was a coward, because I was afraid of snakes, and mice, and horrid creeping things, but, oh, it's so terrible to think of having people we love go away to be killed or

wounded! I'm afraid I can never be brave enough to bear it as I ought."

"Oh, yes, you will," said Olive, smiling; "we shall all learn to be brave. Think of how brave the English and French women have been. An English friend of my mother's wrote that all her three boys were at the front, and that, hard as it was to part from them, there was one thing that would have been much harder, and that would have been if they hadn't wanted to go."

"Oh, Jack wants to go," cried Amy, with shining eyes. "He's been wanting to for more than a year." And, suddenly she was conscious of a sensation of pride in her big, handsome brother, that, with all her love for him, she had never felt before.

"Where are you going, Gretel?" Geraldine Barlow inquired, as they all moved off in the direction of the big gymnasium.

"To Fräulein's room," Gretel answered. "I think I'll see if there is anything I can do for her. She said she had a headache."

Geraldine looked troubled. She was a year younger than Gretel, whom she liked very much, but she had never been quite able to understand her friend's intimacy with the German teacher.

"Don't you think perhaps she might prefer being by herself?" she suggested.

Gretel shook her head.

"I think she would like to see me," she said, and turned resolutely in the direction of the staircase. More than one pair of eyes looked after her curiously.

"What can she see in that German woman to like so much?" said Kitty Sharp. "I can't bear Fräulein myself, she's so silly and sentimental, and did you see how she looked when Miss Minton told us war had been declared? I suppose she's scared to death now we've gone into the war."

"Gretel likes her because she's half German herself," said Ada, scornfully. "If I were in Gretel's place I should change my name. I wouldn't be called Schiller, it's so horribly German."

"Better not let her hear you suggest such a thing," laughed Molly. "She's terribly proud of her father. He really was a great musician, you know."

"Well, suppose he was," scoffed Ada. "Nobody cares about German music now. If I were in Gretel's place, I would never mention my father's name. Her brother's name is Douaine. I'm sure she could take it if she wanted to. If I had a German name I'd change it as quick ——" Ada's eyes snapped, and her lips tightened.

Meantime Gretel had mounted the stairs, and made her way along the wide corridor to Fräulein's room. The door was closed, and she received no response to her first gentle tap, but after waiting a moment, she turned the handle, and went in. The room was in darkness, but the light from the hall dimly revealed a motionless form lying on the bed, and at the opening of the door, the figure suddenly lifted its head.

"Who is it?" inquired Fräulein, in a choked voice.

"Only I," said Gretel, and having closed the door, she made her way in the darkness to the bed. "I came to see if I could do anything for you. Oh, Fräulein dear, I'm so sorry! I know how unhappy you are."

Fräulein buried her face in the pillow, with a sob.

"Oh, Liebchen," she moaned, "it is frightful. My poor, dear country!"

Gretel gave a start, and the color rushed up into her face.

"I—I wasn't thinking about your country," she stammered; "I was only sorry because you are so unhappy."

"But it is of my poor country that I am thinking," sighed the German woman. "My dear ones have suffered so cruelly. My two uncles were killed the first year, and the cousin to whom I was affianced is a prisoner in Russia."

"But the other countries have suffered just as much," said Gretel, "and, after all, it was Germany that started the war."

Fräulein sat up suddenly.

"You say that because you will only listen to one side," she cried, and her voice shook with sudden anger. "You, who are a German yourself, should have a broad mind."

Gretel's cheeks grew hotter, and even her heart began to beat rather fast.

"I am not narrow-minded," she said, indignantly, "and—and, I think you forget, Fräulein, that I am an American. My mother was an American, and I was born in New York."

Fräulein began to cry again.

"You need not fly at me," she sobbed. "Your father was a German."

"I know he was," said Gretel, unsteadily, "and he was one of the best men who ever lived. If he were alive now, I know he would not approve of the dreadful things the Germans have done. He was always kind and good to everybody."

"So was my cousin Rudolph," murmured Fräulein, "but when war comes what can one do? One must obey one's superiors."

"I wouldn't!" cried Gretel, hotly. "I would rather be shot a hundred times over than do some of the things the Germans have done in France and Belgium."

Fräulein threw herself back on the bed, and turned her face to the wall.

"You had better go away," she said, crossly; "you are not sympathetic to-night, and my head is bad."

Gretel moved a few steps nearer to the door.

"Good-night," she said. "I'm sorry you won't let me do anything for you. I didn't mean to be unsympathetic. I don't want to hurt your feelings, or say unkind things about your country, but ——"

"It is your country as well as mine," interrupted the German woman. "I well remember the time when you were proud to be the daughter of the famous Hermann Schiller."

The tears started to Gretel's eyes.

"I am proud of my father now," she said, "just as proud as I ever was in my life, but

it is because he was a good man, and a great musician, not because he was a German."

Fräulein did not answer, and, having reached the door, Gretel opened it, and went out. In the hall she met Geraldine.

"Oh, here you are," said the younger girl, in a tone of evident satisfaction. "I was going to Fräulein's room to look for you. Miss Minton sent me for you. She wants you to play."

Gretel's face brightened. Her music was one of the greatest pleasures of her life, and to be asked to play to Miss Minton was a great compliment. Five minutes later she was at the piano in the Mintons' private parlor, touching the keys with loving fingers, while Miss Minton and her sister knitted socks for the soldiers.

And as she played, all the trouble died out of Gretel's brown eyes, and was replaced by the sweet, dreamy expression, which always came with the music she loved. For the moment, war, discussions with Fräulein, everything was forgotten, but the grand old master-

piece she was playing, and which her father had loved. She played uninterruptedly for nearly an hour, and when she rose at last, in a panic of fear, lest she had tired her audience, Miss Minton's "Thank you, my dear," was so hearty, that the girl's heart swelled with pride, for her schoolmistress seldom paid compliments. Miss Laura said nothing, but as Gretel left the room, she heard the younger sister remark in a voice that was not quite steady:

"I suppose I am very foolish, but music like that always makes me cry. What a gift that child has."

Gretel smiled. She knew that she possessed a great gift, but the knowledge had never made her conceited.

"It is Father's legacy to me," she often told herself, "the only legacy he had to leave; poor, kind Father." And she resolved to do all in her power to perfect herself in this one talent of hers.

The girls were all in the gymnasium, playing games. Gretel heard their voices, but

somehow she did not feel like joining them that evening. So, after lingering a moment in the hall, she went up-stairs to the room she shared with Geraldine. She switched on the electric light, and, going to the bureau, stood for a long time gazing at the framed photograph of her father. It was the photograph of the proverbial German musician, deep-set eyes, and protruding brows, but the eyes were very kind and gentle, and as she looked at the familiar face, Gretel's own eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"Dear Father," she murmured, bending to kiss the picture; "I think I am almost glad you are in heaven. It would have made you so unhappy to know of the terrible things your people have done. But the rest are not like you; oh, they are not like you!" Gretel's head drooped, and putting up both hands to her burning face, she burst into tears.

She was already in bed when Geraldine came up half an hour later, full of the fun they had been having in the gym. When one

is only fourteen, even the news that one's country has gone to war cannot altogether crush the desire for fun.

"The girls all wondered where you were," she said a little reproachfully, as she sat down on the edge of Gretel's bed to unbutton her boots. "I told them you were playing for the Mintons, but I thought perhaps you would come in later."

"I didn't feel like romping to-night," said Gretel, "so I thought I might as well go to bed as do anything else."

"I'm glad you weren't with Fräulein all the evening," said Geraldine. "Ada said she supposed you were hobnobbing together, and it made me mad. You know the sarcastic way she has of saying things."

Gretel sighed.

"I can't help feeling very sorry for Fräulein!" she said. "Just think how we should feel if we were in Germany now, and couldn't go home. It isn't her fault that we are at war, nor her family's fault either."

"No, of course it isn't," Geraldine agreed,

"and I've always stood up for her when Ada and the others said disagreeable things. But she did act rather queerly to-night at supper. Suppose she should turn out to be a spy, or something dreadful like that."

Geraldine was romantic, and she and her twin brother had read a great many detective stories.

"Nonsense," said Gretel, indignantly. "You ought not to say such things even in fun."

"Ada wasn't in fun," said Geraldine. "She said—but perhaps I'd better not tell you if it's going to make you mad."

"Tell me," said Gretel, sitting up in bed. "After all, I suppose Ada has the right to say what she chooses, even if it is unkind."

"Well, she said she doubted very much whether Fräulein was loyal to the United States, and she thought Miss Minton ought not to keep her any longer." Two bright red spots were beginning to burn in Gretel's cheeks.

"Miss Minton wouldn't be so unkind as to send Fräulein away now," she said. "There

wouldn't be any place for her to go except to her uncle's, and I'm sure she wouldn't be happy there. He always makes her pay board in the vacations, and if she hadn't any money I'm afraid he would be very disagreeable. I saw him once, when I went to tea with Fräulein and her aunt, and he had such a hard, cruel face."

Geraldine looked grave.

"Well, I hope it won't happen," she said, "but most of the girls say they won't take any more German lessons now we are at war. I wouldn't worry about it, anyhow. Miss Minton is strict, but she is never unjust. Even if she should send Fräulein away, I'm sure she would pay her for the rest of the term. Oh, Gretel, isn't the war exciting? Just think, lots of people we know may have to go."

Gretel's lip quivered.

"I know," she said, softly. "It's very terrible. My heart has been so heavy all the evening that I just couldn't play games. Geraldine, let's say our prayers together, and ask God to take care of our dear ones, and bring

this dreadful fighting and killing to an end before long."

"All right," said Geraldine, in a tone of unusual gravity. "Of course it's terrible, only at first it seemed so exciting I didn't think of anything else. I suppose it's very selfish, but I can't help being thankful Father is over age, and Jerry only fourteen. Molly Chester said the same thing about her family this evening."

Gretel smiled indulgently, for, though Geraldine was only a year younger than herself, she still looked upon her friend as quite a little girl.

"I'm thankful, too," she said. "I suppose Percy is over age, too, but I don't know what he may decide to do. He thought America ought to have gone into the war two years ago. Now hurry and undress, and then we'll say our prayers, and try to go to sleep."

CHAPTER II

EASTER IN WAR TIME

It was Easter Sunday. Such a strange Easter, quite unlike any the girls had ever known before, for though the world was bathed in bright spring sunshine, and a robin was singing his merriest song in the elm-tree outside the schoolroom window, there was a strange feeling of solemnity about everything —a feeling as if something were going to happen, and the storm might break at any moment.

They had walked to church as usual, but even on the quiet village street little groups of people were talking earnestly together, and every face they saw was grave, and a little anxious. The service had been beautiful, and the village children had sung the Easter carols, as they always did, but after the regular Easter sermon, the clergyman had made an earnest ap-

peal to his congregation to do their duty as loyal Americans, and to be ready for sacrifice now that the call had come. Gretel had felt her heart thrill as she listened, and she could not help glancing at her schoolmates for sympathy. Amy Bowring was crying softly, and Ada looked flushed and excited.

"I've been praying all winter that we might not have to go into the war," Molly Chester whispered, as they walked down the aisle, while the organ played "The Star-Spangled Banner," "but I'm glad we're in now. I shouldn't like to be ashamed of my country."

They had walked home very quietly, nobody feeling much inclined to talk, and now the midday dinner was over, and most of the girls had gathered in the schoolroom to write their weekly letters home. One of the things which had helped to make Miss Minton's little school popular for so many years was the fact that she had always tried to make it as much as possible like home. There were a few rules, which must be followed, but in general the girls were allowed to do very much, out of

lesson hours, as they would if they were in their own homes. Miss Minton always declared that she would not keep a girl in her school whom she could not trust, and when girls—and boys, too, for that matter—are put on their honor, it is really surprising how comparatively seldom they get into mischief. So the girls at Miss Minton's were allowed to spend their Sunday afternoons very much as they would have spent them at home, although there was a general understanding that Sunday was the day for writing home letters. No one was obliged to attend afternoon service unless she wished, but in the evening they sang hymns, and Miss Minton asked Bible questions, which was quite exciting, as everybody tried to be ready with a correct answer, and Miss Minton had a disconcerting way of skipping about, so that it was impossible to guess what question she would ask next. On this Easter afternoon Grace, Olive, and one or two of the other girls, had gone to church with Miss Laura, and Miss Whiting, the arithmetic teacher, but Gretel, Geraldine, Molly, Kitty,

Angel, and Ada were all in the schoolroom writing letters.

For a while it was very quiet, with only the scratching of pens, and an occasional rustle of paper, to break the silence, but at last Ada finished her letter, and remarked, as she slipped it into the envelope:

"I've written Mother that I don't intend to take another German lesson. I know she'll approve."

"I envy you," said Kitty. "I wish I could write the same to my mother, but I know she'd say I must do as Miss Minton thinks best. I hate German."

"So do I," chimed in Amy, "but I suppose we've got to study it as long as Fräulein stays. Did you ever see any one with such a long face as Fräulein has worn ever since war was declared?"

"I'm sorry for her," said Molly, sympathetically. "She must hate to feel how everybody dislikes her country. I should have a long face, too, if I were in her place."

"You wouldn't if you were loyal to Amer-

ica," declared Ada. "You would be glad your old country was getting what she deserved."

"There are some good, loyal Germans in this country," put in Angel. "Gretel knew ever so many when her father was alive, and some of them were lovely; weren't they, Gretel?"

"I don't believe all Germans are wicked," said Gretel, blushing. "Those musicians who came to Father's studio were very kind and generous to each other. I don't believe any of them would have done the terrible things we've been reading about in the papers."

"Wouldn't they, though?" scoffed Ada. "Just give them a chance, and see what they would do. My mother says she wouldn't trust a German, not if ——"

Ada paused abruptly, as the door opened, and Fräulein herself appeared on the threshold. The little German teacher was looking flushed and agitated, and stood for a moment, glancing from one face to another, until her eye met Gretel's sympathetic gaze. Gretel was feeling rather hot and indignant at the

moment. Ada's words had hurt her keenly, and she was conscious of a sudden access of affection for Fräulein, who seemed so forlorn and unhappy.

"Would you like to go for a walk, Fräulein?" she asked, kindly. "I've finished my letter, and I'd love to go with you."

Fräulein shook her head, and her lip quivered.

"I have come to say good-bye to you all," she said. "I go this evening."

There was a little stir of excitement, pens were laid down, and all eyes were turned in surprise towards the German teacher.

"We—we didn't think you would go," gasped Molly, and Angel added politely:

"We are very sorry. I hope no one in your family is ill."

"No," said Fräulein, "it is not illness that causes me to leave. It is because Miss Minton thinks it best. She says none of you will wish to study German any more this year."

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence, and then Geraldine said, awkwardly:

"It'll be rather jolly to have a holiday in the middle of the term, won't it? I wish I were going to have one; don't you, girls?"

"I do," said Angel. "I don't believe it will be a long holiday, though. The war will surely be over by next autumn, and then, of course, Fräulein will come back."

"I do not think so," said Fräulein, and there was a sound in her voice that might have been either pain or anger. "The war will not be over as soon as you think. Germany is still very strong; she will not give in for a long time yet. And in the meantime the poor Germans in this country must starve, I suppose."

"Oh, no they won't, I'm sure they won't!" protested Angel. "It is very hard for them, I know, and I am dreadfully sorry, but if we were in Germany now it would be just as hard for us. I don't believe Miss Minton meant to be unkind."

"She thinks herself justified, I suppose," returned the German woman. "You all do that, but it does not alter the fact. However, that is not the question now. I have come to

say good-bye. I am taking the five-thirty train to New York."

All the girls except Ada rose politely.

"Good-bye, Fräulein," said Molly, holding out her hand. "I—I hope you'll have a pleasant summer."

The others followed Molly's example, and they all shook hands. Then Fräulein turned to Ada.

"Will you not bid me good-bye?" she said. "I know you have never liked me, but may we not part friends?"

"Good-bye, Fräulein," said Ada, coldly. "I am sorry you think I have never liked you. I have always tried to be polite."

"Actions speak louder than words," quoted Fräulein, and without another word, she turned to leave the room.

"I'll come and help you pack," said Gretel, and, with a reproachful glance at Ada, she followed the German woman from the room.

"Well, of all the disagreeable, impertinent people!" burst out Ada, as the door closed behind them. "To tell me I never liked her!

It's quite true, of course, but I didn't suppose she knew it."

"I don't see how she could have helped knowing it," said Geraldine, bluntly. "I think you might have been polite enough to stand up and shake hands. None of us cares much about her, but it isn't necessary to be rude."

Ada reddened, and bit her lip.

"I don't care how rude I am to a German," she said. "I hate them all, and all loyal Americans ought to hate them. Think of Belgium and the *Lusitania*. I'm not like your friend Gretel Schiller."

Geraldine sprang to her feet; her eyes were flashing.

"Ada Godfrey," she cried, her voice trembling with rage, "you are the meanest girl I ever knew. You know perfectly well that Gretel is as good an American as any one of us. She can't help the fact that her father was a German. If you ever say a thing like that again I'll—I'll ——"

"Oh, don't quarrel, girls," expostulated

Molly. "Of course we know Gretel is all right, and it really was very rude to treat Fräulein as you did, Ada. Of course, she was rude, too, but then she is in a pretty hard position. Some Germans are very nice. We had a Fräulein when we were little, and we all loved her dearly. If we dislike Fräulein, I think it's principally because she has never seemed to care much about us."

"She seemed to care a good deal for Gretel," muttered Ada, but she said no more, and Geraldine also relapsed into silence, and went on with the letter she was writing her twin brother at St. Mark's. But if any one had chanced to look over her shoulder, it would have been seen that Ada was still in her black books. For Jerry Barlow was as devoted in his allegiance to Gretel as his sister, and Geraldine was sure of his sympathy.

Meanwhile Gretel had followed Fräulein upstairs in silence, neither of them uttering a word until they had reached the German teacher's room and closed the door. Then Fräulein spoke.

"Impudent little beast!" she said, and then collapsed in the rocking-chair, and began to cry.

Gretel was very uncomfortable. She was sincerely sorry for Fräulein, and angry with Ada, but at the same time she felt convinced that things could not be quite as bad as Fräulein had represented. So, instead of putting her arms round her friend's neck, and comforting her—which was what Fräulein expected — she remained standing in embarrassed silence, till the German woman demanded between sobs:

"Have you nothing to say to me? Have you, too, turned against me because of this cruel war? Ah, I did not expect this of you—I did not think ——" Sobs checked further utterance.

Now, Gretel had a very soft heart, and the sight of this distress was more than she could bear. In another moment her arms were round her friend, and she was trying to draw Fräulein's hands down from her face.

"Oh, Fräulein dear," she protested, crying

herself from pure sympathy, "I am so terribly, terribly sorry! Do try not to be so unhappy. You know I haven't turned against you; I couldn't do such a thing. I am your friend; I would do anything I could to help you. You can't help being German. You are no more to blame for this dreadful war than Father would be if he were alive now."

"Of course I am not to blame," choked Fräulein, "but people treat me as if I were. It is cruel and outrageous, and what is more, I will not endure it." And suddenly Fräulein's foot came down with a stamp, that rather startled Gretel, for she had not realized before that her friend had a temper.

"I know it is cruel," she said, soothingly, "but I don't see how we can help it. People are sometimes rather unkind to me, too, although I am only half German."

"Half German," repeated Fräulein, scornfully; "yes, that is it, you are only half German. You will not help the cause, but I am not afraid; I will work for my country! I——"

"Oh, Fräulein, don't talk like that," interrupted Gretel. "It isn't right. You are an American citizen. If people heard you say such things, you might get into dreadful trouble. Perhaps, after all, you will be happier away from here. I sometimes wish I could go away myself, when Ada—I mean when people say unkind things about Father's being German; but I am afraid it would be cowardly to ask Percy to let me go home before the end of the term."

"I have been dismissed," cried Fräulein, returning to her grievance, "dismissed for no fault, except that I am a German—one of the hated race. I am turned out like a dog; I may starve for aught they care."

"Oh, that is terrible!" gasped Gretel. "Do you mean that Miss Minton didn't pay you your salary?"

"Pay! What is pay? Do they think because they offer one a little money everything is to be forgiven and forgotten? Yes, she has paid me for the rest of the season, but how long will that money last, and when it is gone

what am I to do? My uncle will only let me share his home while I have money to pay my board, and who will employ a German now that this country has gone mad, and joined our enemies?"

"I know it's going to be very hard for you," murmured Gretel. "Percy gives me a very large allowance—much more than I really need—if you would let me help you ——"

Fräulein's face softened.

"You are a dear, generous child," she said, "but it would never be allowed. If your brother were to find out that you were helping a German, your allowance would be stopped on the instant. Of course, you might be able to keep him in ignorance. I am not thinking of myself but of others. Are you obliged to render an account of how your allowance is spent?"

"No," said Gretel; "Percy and Barbara are very kind. They never ask how I spend my money, but I always tell them. I couldn't do a thing I thought they might disapprove of without telling them. It wouldn't be fair."

Fräulein sighed and shook her head.

"Then you may be quite certain you will never be able to help a German in distress," she said, "but you have a kind heart, and there are not many kind hearts in this cruel world now."

There was something very pathetic in the quiver of Fräulein's voice, and in her red, swollen eyes, and all at once Gretel found herself recalling the dingy little flat, where her friend's relatives lived. After all, it was very sad to be alone in an enemy's country in war time. Before she quite realized what she was doing, her arms were round Fräulein's neck again, and she was kissing her, and murmuring in her half-forgotten German:

"Dear Fräulein, I love you very much, and if I can ever help you in any way, indeed, indeed I will try."

An hour and a half later, Gretel was standing at the hall window, watching the station bus, with Fräulein and her belongings inside, disappearing from sight in the gathering dusk.

In spite of herself, she could not help a little sigh of relief.

"Poor Fräulein," she said to herself, "I'm terribly sorry for her, of course, but I can't help feeling rather glad she's gone. I am sure she'll be much happier with her own people, even if she does think she won't."

She was turning to go up-stairs when she encountered Miss Laura, coming out of Miss Minton's private sitting-room. Miss Laura was much more approachable than her sister, and would sometimes condescend to be quite friendly, even confidential with the girls. On the present occasion she stopped Gretel to inquire rather mysteriously:

"Has she gone?"

"Do you mean Fräulein?" asked Gretel. "Yes, the bus has just left."

"Well, I must say I am relieved," said Miss Laura. "I was so afraid she would make a scene of some sort; those foreigners are so dramatic. She has quite upset Sister; she was so rude; really almost violent in her language. I should have been frightened to death, but Sis-

ter is always so calm. She assured the woman there was no reason for her leaving at once. It was merely a question of discontinuing the German classes during the war. Fräulein flew into a rage, and declared she would go by the first train, and that no earthly consideration would induce her to spend another night under our roof. Downright ungrateful conduct, I call it, after the care Sister took of her when she was laid up so long with bronchitis last winter. But then, what else can one expect from a German?"

Again the hot blood rushed up into Gretel's cheeks, and she hurried away that Miss Laura might not see the tears that had started to her eyes.

"I don't suppose they mean to be unkind," she told herself, as she went up-stairs to her own room. "Perhaps Miss Laura didn't even remember that Father was a German, but it does hurt when people say such things, and I can't altogether blame Fräulein for being angry, although, of course, she had no right to be rude to Miss Minton."

CHAPTER III

BREAKING-UP DAY

It was the fourteenth of June, and "Breaking-Up" day at Miss Minton's. For more than two months the United States had been at war with Germany, and during that time many things had happened. Even the quiet little Connecticut village, where Miss Minton lived, had begun to realize something of what war meant. There was a Service Flag waving from each of more than a dozen houses, and only the day before there had been a sad leave-taking at the station, when thirty boys had left for the nearest training-camp. Registration Day had come and gone, and more than ten million young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty had signed their names.

Among the girls at Miss Minton's, war was also beginning to seem very real. Amy's

brother had left Harvard, and gone for a month's training before being sent overseas. One of Olive's brothers had joined the Flying Corps, and the other was already on his way to France. Angel Thayer's father had offered his services for foreign duty, and Gretel's brother was doing Government work in Washington.

But people cannot always be sad, even in war time, and on that glorious June morning, when the air was heavy with the fragrance of roses and honeysuckle, and the birds were singing as birds only do sing in June, a group of very bright young faces was gathered on Miss Minton's front porch, awaiting the arrival of the station bus.

"I'm so excited at the thought of going home I can hardly wait to get to the station," said Molly Chester, joyfully. "It seems an age since I saw my family in March."

"Haven't your people gone to the country yet?" inquired Kitty, whose own family had already moved to their summer home on the Jersey shore.

"Oh, yes, they went up to New London on the first. I'm to meet Father in town this afternoon, and go up with him."

"New London will be interesting this summer, with the naval station so near," remarked Margaret May. "You and Ada are lucky to have summer places there." Margaret spoke a little enviously. Her own home was in a small town in Vermont, and her hopes of an exciting summer were not high.

"I dare say we shall see a good deal of the officers," Molly said. "My cousin Stephen Cranston is stationed at New London, and I suppose he will bring some of the boys up to our house. I don't believe we shall be allowed to go near the naval station, though; they are so afraid of spies."

"Wouldn't it be exciting to catch a spy?" said Geraldine, to whom war still seemed like an exciting game. "Jerry and I used to play spy games when we were kids. I always loved reading stories about them, didn't you, Gretel?"

"Yes," said Gretel, "when they were only

stories, but now when it's real!" She gave a little involuntary shudder.

"I hope every spy will be caught and shot," remarked Ada, the belligerent.

"German spies, you mean," corrected Kitty. "Our boys have to be spies sometimes, too, you know. All spies are not wicked. There were André and Nathan Hale, for instance."

Before Ada could reply, somebody announced that the bus was in sight, and in another moment it had rattled up to the door. Miss Minton and Miss Laura came hurrying out to say good-bye, and there was a great deal of chattering and laughter, as the twelve girls and their belongings were packed into the big stage. They were to be accompanied to New York by Madame and Miss Brown, the physical-culture teacher, there to be met by friends or relatives.

"School isn't such a bad place, after all," said Angel, wiping her eyes, as the bus turned out of Miss Minton's gate into the village street. "I never knew how much I liked Miss

Minton until I was saying good-bye to her, and we have had some jolly times, even if the teachers were strict, and the lessons hard."

"People always talk like that on 'Breaking-Up' day," said Ada, with a superior smile. "You'll feel differently when September comes. I thought I never could bear to come back the second year, but Mother insisted, and I'm not sorry I came now the term is over."

"I wonder if we shall all come back next year," said Amy. "I suppose the war will make a difference in everything. I don't believe Mother will let me leave her if Jack is away. She says she can't bear to be parted from both of us."

"Well, don't let's bother about next year, or war, or anything else disagreeable," said Molly. "Let's just remember that it's June, and that we're all going home for the summer. You look awfully happy, Gretel; I had no idea you'd be so glad to leave school."

Gretel laughed.

"I am glad," she said, with a long breath of pure delight. "School is all right, and the

Mintons are very kind, but there isn't any place in the world like home. It seems as if I could hardly wait to get to New York and see Percy and Barbara."

Molly regarded her friend curiously. It was not the first time the idea had occurred to her that possibly Gretel had not had altogether a comfortable time during the past few months. She had never complained, and had been almost always cheerful, but there were times when her eyes had a sad, hurt look in them, and those were generally the times when some one had made a sharp or thoughtless allusion to her German antecedents. Molly was a kind-hearted girl, and really fond of Gretel, and she made a sudden resolve to try to make up to her friend for some of the half-unintentional slights she had received.

They were a very merry party on the train, and a source of much amusement to their fellow-travelers, during the short journey, but as they drew near to the great city, where they were to separate, everybody was suddenly aware of feeling just a little sad.

"You'll be sure to write once a week, won't you, Angel?" Amy Bowring whispered to her chum. "It's going to be terribly lonely without Jack. We always did so many things together, you know."

"Of course I will," promised Angel, "and perhaps your mother will let you make me a visit. Beverly isn't so very far from Bar Harbor."

"I shall expect a visit from some of you," declared Margaret. "Mother said I could ask three girls, but the trouble is I want you all, and don't know which three to choose."

"We shall have to draw lots," laughed Kitty. "Then nobody can possibly feel slighted. Why, here we are in the tunnel already; we must hurry and get our things together."

Five minutes later the suburban train was gliding into the Grand Central Station.

"There's Jerry!" cried Geraldine, joyfully, as they hurried along the crowded platform, and the next moment she was rapturously hugging a tall schoolboy, whose round, good-hu-

mored face displayed an odd mixture of pleasure and embarrassment.

"Oh, Jerry, you darling, I am glad to see you! When did you get home?"

"Last night," returned her brother, extricating himself, not without some difficulty, from her embrace. "School closed yesterday, and I came home on the Boston Flyer. I say, old girl, you needn't hug a fellow like that before people, you know. Where's Gretel?"

"She was here a minute ago," said Geraldine. "Oh, there she is, talking to Molly Chester. Are Mr. or Mrs. Douaine here?"

"I don't know; I haven't seen them. Mother sent me in the car, and it's waiting outside, so we can drop Gretel at her house just as well as not. Who's that girl talking to the man with gray hair?"

"That's Angel Thayer," said Geraldine, following her brother's glance. "She's pretty, isn't she? I'll introduce you if I get a chance. That gentleman must be her uncle. Her father has gone to the war. Oh, Jerry, isn't the war exciting?"

"I should say it was! I only wish I were old enough to enlist. Some of the seniors are doing it, but they won't take a fellow unless he's over eighteen, worse luck. Oh, there's Mrs. Douaine, so Gretel's all right. We may as well go along."

Gretel had stood a little in the background while her friends were being greeted by their various relatives, but at sight of a very pretty young woman hurrying towards her through the crowd, her face brightened, and she ran eagerly forward to greet her sister-in-law.

"I am so sorry to be late, Gretel dear," Mrs. Douaine said, kissing her affectionately. "I left home in plenty of time, but we met a regiment marching down Fifth Avenue, and there was such a block in the traffic, I thought I should never get here. Did you give your check to the expressman on the train?"

"Now, do tell me all about everything," exclaimed Gretel, leaning back in her brother's comfortable limousine, as they moved away from the station. "Is Percy all right?"

"Yes, but frightfully busy. He has entered

heart and soul into war work. By the way, I have a surprise for you. Where do you think we are going to spend the summer?"

"I haven't the least idea. Not Bar Harbor or Murray Bay, I suppose?"

"No, indeed; nowhere as cool as Maine or Canada. I am afraid we shall have to put up with a good deal of hot weather, but it can't be helped. You see, Percy expects to be in Washington nearly all summer, and I couldn't bear the thought of going so far away from him, so we have rented a house there, or rather in the suburbs. It is rather prettily situated, right on the banks of the Potomac, and within very easy distance of the city. We expect to move down the last of next week. How do you think you will enjoy spending a summer in Washington?"

"I shall love it, I am sure," said Gretel, enthusiastically. "And, oh, Barbara, I want to do some war work, too. It seems as if every one ought to do something to help just a little."

"Every one is doing something to help,"

said Mrs. Douaine. "You have no idea what the women had done already. Two of my best friends have gone over to nurse in Paris hospitals, and three more have joined the woman's motor corps, and are learning to drive ambulances. I want to help Percy all I can, and, oh, I am so thankful it is Washington for him, and not the trenches. He was determined to go at first, in spite of his being over age, but they turned him down on account of his eyes. He is terribly near-sighted, you know. So now he has asked for home service in Washington, and been accepted."

Gretel uttered a little sigh of satisfaction, and slipped her hand into her sister-in-law's.

"I can't help being thankful he isn't going," she said, "though I suppose it must have been a great disappointment to him. Some of the girls' brothers are going, and it seems so dreadful. Ada Godfrey says we ought to be glad to give our fathers and brothers to the country, but Molly Chester says it's easy for Ada to talk about giving up, when she hasn't any one to give herself."

Mrs. Douaine laughed.

"I am afraid that is the way with a good many people," she said, "but I was willing to let Percy go, though the thought of parting from him almost broke my heart. It must be a wonderful thing to die for one's country, Gretel."

"I think I could die for my country if I were a man," said Gretel, with kindling eyes. "I never realized how much I loved it till the war came, but now every time I see the American flag, I feel as if I wanted to go right off and do something."

Then Mrs. Douaine spoke of something else, and nothing more was said about the war till the car drew up before the house on a quiet, uptown street, which had been Gretel's home for the past three years.

"It is glorious to be at home, even if all the furniture is covered up in brown linen," cried Gretel, joyfully, as she followed her sister-in-law up-stairs, after greeting the elderly butler and smiling parlor maid in the front hall.

"Your room hasn't been disturbed yet," said Mrs. Douaine. "I wouldn't have it touched till you came home. I thought it would seem more homelike to find everything just as usual. The rest of the house is pretty well dismantled, however. There's so much to be done, and we may remain in Washington till the war is over."

"You are a dear, Barbara!" exclaimed Gretel, heartily. "It will be lovely to find all my things just as I left them. I do love that room so. I dream about it sometimes at school. But I'd love to help with the packing. You have no idea what a good packer I have grown to be. The girls all get me to help them with their trunks. Ah, here's Dora." And she paused to shake hands with a rosy-cheeked maid, who was awaiting them at the head of the stairs.

There was no doubt of the fact that Dora was pleased to welcome her young lady home. Her honest face fairly beamed with pleasure, and she followed Gretel to her room, and insisted on unpacking her suit-case.

"You'll spoil me if you wait on me too much," protested Gretel, laughing. "We have to wait on ourselves at school. I've made my own bed every morning all winter."

Dora looked rather shocked.

"Well, you won't make your own bed here, that's one sure thing," she announced, with decision. "I don't see why young ladies want to do their own work."

"I believe you have imbibed some of Higgins's English ideas about young ladies," laughed Gretel. "I never shall forget her horror when Percy and Barbara said I might go out by myself. 'Such a proceeding had never been heard of in the Henglish Haristocracy.' By the way, has any one heard from Higgins lately?"

"Yes, Miss, Martha had a letter last week. She's decided to stay on in England with her sister, whose two sons have been killed in the war. She asked to be respectfully remembered to all the family."

Gretel's bright face clouded, and she suddenly laid down the brush with which she had

been smoothing her hair, preparatory to going down to luncheon.

"Two sons killed," she exclaimed in horror. "Oh, Dora, how perfectly dreadful!"

"Yes, it is dreadful," agreed the maid, with a sigh, "and now this country's gone in, it's going to be worse still. Peter's enlisted."

"Peter! Why, Dora, how could he? He isn't seventeen yet."

"They wouldn't have taken him if they'd known how young he was," said Dora, not without some pride in her tone, "but he fibbed about his age, and they accepted him. Mother's been crying her eyes out about his going, but Father says if a boy has got pluck enough to do a thing like that, he isn't going to interfere. Peter's at Camp Schuyler now, and he expects to be sent over any time. I wish you could see him in his uniform."

"I wish I could," said Gretel, "but it does seem rather queer. Things are changing so fast. Why, it was only three or four years ago that Peter was just a mischievous little boy. Do you remember the night he and Lillie came

to play and sing for me at Mrs. Marsh's, and the grand row over the cream puffs?" Gretel laughed merrily over the childish recollection, but she was grave again in a moment.

"I can't think of Peter going to the war," she said. "He is the first person I really know well who is actually going, and it seems to make it all so much more real. I am very sorry for your mother, Dora, and for all of you."

"We're no worse off than thousands of others," said Dora, philosophically. "Now do let me take off those heavy boots, Miss Gretel. They're much too thick to wear in the house this hot day, and there's a nice pair of slippers in the closet."

Gretel was still looking rather grave when she joined her sister-in-law at the luncheon table. But Mrs. Douaine was too busy and preoccupied herself to notice it.

"I am so sorry to leave you on your first afternoon, Gretel," she said, regretfully, "but I have no end of things to attend to before we leave for Washington. Do you mind staying

at home, or would you rather come out with me?"

"I think I'll stay at home unless you need me for anything," said Gretel. "There is always something rather exciting in going over all my old treasures when I haven't seen them for three months, and besides, I want to play on the dear old piano. I suppose Percy is in Washington."

"He has been for the past week, but I have just received a telegram, saying he's coming home for a few days. He said he would be here this afternoon, but didn't mention the train, so I can't meet him at the station."

Gretel looked pleased. She was very fond of her brother, and the thought of his absence had been the one shadow on her home-coming.

"I am so glad," she said. "Oh, it is good to know we are going to be all together this summer! You must give me lots of work to do, Barbara; I want to be busy every minute. Of course we've been doing a lot of knitting at school. I've made three pairs of socks for the soldiers already. I was the only girl who

knew how to knit socks, and I taught Molly and Angel Thayer."

"And how did you learn yourself?" Mrs. Douaine asked in some surprise.

Gretel laughed and blushed.

"I hardly know how I did learn," she said. "Old Mrs. Lippheim taught me to knit when I was nine, and I suppose knitting comes to me naturally. Ada Godfrey says it comes from my German ancestors."

Gretel spoke cheerfully, but there was a little embarrassment in her tone which her sister-in-law did not fail to notice.

"I hope none of the girls have made unkind remarks about your German ancestors," she said, rather anxiously.

Gretel's eyes dropped, and she became suddenly very much interested in the contemplation of her salad.

"Oh, no," she answered, evasively, "I don't think any one meant to be unkind. Ada has a sharp way of saying things sometimes, but I suppose she can't help it. She was very fond of an uncle, who was lost on the *Lusitania*,

and that has made her feel very bitterly towards the Germans. All the other girls were lovely to me." And then Gretel changed the subject by inquiring for some New York friends, and nothing more was said about Ada or her prejudices.

CHAPTER IV

FRÄULEIN SIELING MAKES A CALL

It was four o'clock, and Gretel was at the piano in the dismantled drawing-room, playing softly to herself. The afternoon had been, on the whole, a pleasant one. She had spent an hour looking over her old treasures, which included a bundle of letters, tied together with a red ribbon. They were her greatest treasure of all, for they were all from her father—letters he had written her on his brief absences from home, when she was sent to stay with their kind old German friend Frau Lippheim. Gretel always read those letters over at least once during the holidays, and generally cried a little during the reading, but even that was not altogether unpleasant, for Gretel possessed just enough German sentimentality to rather enjoy the luxury of a few comfortable tears. She had cried rather more than usual

to-day, and as she put the old letters back in the drawer of her desk, had whispered softly:

"Dear Father; you were so good and kind to every one. Surely there must be other good Germans in the world as well as you."

Then she had had another little chat with Dora, and been shown the photograph of the hero Peter—Dora's younger brother—taken in his uniform, and now she had gone to the drawing-room for an hour of music.

She had just finished the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," when she was rather startled by a ring at the front door-bell. The house had been so quiet all the afternoon, that any sound would have been startling, and, thinking her brother might have arrived earlier than he was expected, she paused in her playing to listen. She heard the front door open, a murmur of voices, followed by approaching footsteps, and the butler appeared in the doorway.

"A lady to see you, Miss Gretel."

"To see me, Johnson!" and Gretel sprang from the piano stool in surprise. The next

moment she had caught sight of another figure, close behind Johnson, and was hurrying forward to meet it.

"Why, Fräulein, how good of you to come so soon! I only got home this morning."

Gretel's tone was cordial, but she was conscious of a sudden sinking of her heart. She was glad to see her old friend, she told herself, of course she was very glad indeed, and yet—and yet—she could not help wishing Fräulein had not come quite so soon.

"How delightfully cool it is in here!" exclaimed the German woman, sinking wearily down upon the sofa. "The streets are like an oven. This American heat is frightful."

"Let me fan you," cried Gretel, eager to atone for that slight feeling of discomfort, and seizing a fan from the table, she began plying it with rather unnecessary vigor.

"It is refreshing," murmured Fräulein, half closing her eyes. She was really looking very worn and tired, Gretel thought. "Oh, it is good to see you again, my child. Have you missed me?"

"It seemed very strange after you went away," said Gretel, trying to evade a direct reply to the question. "I missed my German lessons very much. How did you know I was coming home to-day?"

"I knew the school was to close on the fourteenth, and felt sure you would all leave by the morning train, as you did last year. I could not let the day pass without seeing you; I have missed you so terribly."

There was gentle reproach in Fräulein's tone, and it made Gretel vaguely uncomfortable, although she could not help being flattered as well.

"I hope you have gotten my letters," she said, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, and it was good of you to write, but letters are not the same as speaking face to face, and I have missed my favorite pupil sadly."

Fräulein put out her hand, and Gretel, supposing she was expected to take it, did so, and had her fingers squeezed affectionately.

"You wrote that you were going as gov-

erness to a German family," she said. "I thought you would have left New York before I came back."

"I did leave," said Fräulein. "I went to Long Island for a week, but I did not like the family. The children did not treat me with proper respect."

"And are you back at your aunt's now?" Gretel asked.

"Yes, and I am happier there than I ever expected to be. There is nothing to draw people together like a great common sorrow."

"Oh, has anything dreadful happened in your family?" Gretel's voice was full of real concern now.

"Not in our family, but our country—the Fatherland. I was alluding to the war."

"Oh," said Gretel, "of course; I didn't think. But your uncle is too old for the draft; he won't have to go, will he?"

"Certainly not," said Fräulein, "and thank God for it. You would not have a German fight against his country?"

"No, of course not, but your uncle has been

in this country so many years. He is an American citizen, is he not?"

"That fact cannot make him untrue to the Fatherland," said Fräulein, reproachfully. "What a strange idea you Americans have of patriotism. Your father would say so if he were living to-day."

"I don't think he would," said Gretel, decidedly. "He might still love his country, but he would not approve of the terrible things Germany has done. He would be loyal to America, where he had lived so many years. Hasn't your uncle made most of his money here?"

"Money, money," repeated the German woman, scornfully, "you Americans are always thinking of money. As if getting rich were the only important thing in this world. My uncle would not allow such a sordid consideration to interfere with his duty. He is a true patriot, and his country comes before everything else."

"You like him better than you used to, don't you?" said Gretel, innocently. "You always

said he was so hard and unkind, and did not make your aunt very happy."

Fräulein colored and bit her lip.

"I did not understand him as well as I do now," she explained. "One sometimes makes mistakes. I have learned many things in these sad months."

"I am glad you like him better," said Gretel; "it must make living in his house much pleasanter. Are you looking for another position?"

"Not just now. Positions for Germans are not easily found in these days. I shall probably spend the summer with my uncle and aunt. I am helping them in many little ways, and they seem to enjoy having me with them. But tell me about yourself, and how it is that all the rugs and ornaments are put away? Are you leaving town at once?"

"We are going to Washington next week," said Gretel, and she repeated what her sister-in-law had told her of their summer plans. Fräulein looked much interested.

"Washington will be interesting," she said;

" you will meet people and hear things. I suppose there is no hope of their wanting a governess or companion for you during the summer? "

Fräulein spoke so eagerly that Gretel felt very sorry to have to disappoint her hopes.

" I am afraid not," she said, regretfully; " indeed, I am quite sure they don't. I am going to help Barbara all I can in her war work, and I really don't need a companion, you know."

" No, I don't suppose you do," agreed Fräulein, with a sigh. " I only hoped it might be possible. It would be a great joy to me, but alas! I know it cannot be."

" Let me ring for tea," exclaimed Gretel, springing from her seat, with a sudden inspiration. " I know you would like some tea. Shall we have it hot or iced? "

Fräulein said she would prefer it iced, and when Gretel returned from giving the order, her friend asked her if she would not play something.

" You were playing when I came in," she

said, "and it was so beautiful to hear the dear German music again. My uncle and aunt are not musical, and I have no money for concerts now."

Gretel was delighted to comply with this request, and the next half hour slipped away very pleasantly. When the tea was brought in, Fräulein sipped hers leisurely, and ate frosted cakes, while Gretel gave her all the latest school news, in which, however, she did not appear quite as much interested as her young hostess expected. Only once did she manifest any particular interest, and that was when Gretel happened to mention that Molly Chester and Ada Godfrey were both spending the summer at New London.

"Molly has asked me to visit her," Gretel prattled on. "I should love to go, for I like Molly so much, but I may not be able, as Washington is so far away. Percy and Barbara don't like to have me travel alone."

"If they should want some one to travel with you," said Fräulein, in a tone of suddenly aroused interest, "I should be very glad to

offer my services. It might not be convenient to send a maid, and I would not in the least mind going to Washington to meet you."

Before Gretel could answer, there was another ring at the door-bell, and quite forgetting her visitor for the moment, she eagerly started to her feet.

"Please excuse me for a moment," she said, hurriedly. "I think it may be my brother, and I am so anxious to see him. Barbara said he would be here some time this afternoon." And, without waiting for Fräulein's permission, she ran out into the hall, and in another moment was greeting a tall gentleman, with brown hair, and eyes like her own.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Douaine, kissing his little sister affectionately, and then holding her off at arm's length; "this is a pleasant surprise. I thought you were not due before to-morrow. How well you are looking. School life certainly seems to agree with you. Is Barbara at home?"

"No," said Gretel; "she had to go out to attend to some things, but she told me to tell

you she would hurry back as early as she could. You look awfully tired, Percy; did you have a hot journey?"

"Beastly. Between the heat and the dust, we were almost suffocated. It's good to get home, though, even if only for a day or two. What do you think of Barbara's summer plans?"

"I love them," said Gretel. "I am sure Washington will be tremendously interesting. Come in and have some tea. It's all ready, and iced, too, just the way you like it. I have a friend here, but you won't mind her."

Mr. Douaine said that he certainly would not mind meeting any friend of Gretel's, and followed his sister into the drawing-room.

"This is my friend Fräu —— Miss Sieling," said Gretel, thinking that possibly her visitor might prefer to drop the German prefix under present circumstances. "I am sure you have heard me speak of her, Percy. She was very kind to me when I first went to Miss Minton's."

Mr. Douaine smiled, and shook hands with

the visitor, while Miss Sieling blushed, and murmured something ending with "Anything I have ever done for dear Gretel has been only a pleasure to myself." Then they all sat down, but it soon became evident to Gretel that her friend was not as much at her ease as usual, and in a short time she rose to go.

"Oh, don't go yet," cried Gretel, hospitably. "I haven't told you half the school news, and it isn't more than five o'clock."

But Fräulein persisted in her intention of leaving at once. The air was so heavy, she said, she was sure there would be a thunder-storm before long.

"And you know how nervous I am in a thunder-storm," she added, "so don't urge me to run the risk of being caught out in one."

Gretel said no more, but accompanied her guest to the front door, after Fräulein and Mr. Douaine had exchanged a cool farewell.

"Come and see me, Liebchen," whispered Fräulein, whose manner had resumed all its old warmth the moment they were out of Mr. Douaine's hearing. "My aunt told me to be

sure to appoint an afternoon when you can come to tea."

Gretel hesitated.

"I am not sure if I can," she faltered. "We are going to Washington so soon, you know. I may not have a spare afternoon."

But Fräulein would not hear of any such flimsy excuses.

"If you do not come I shall be offended," she protested. "I shall think you no longer care for me, and that would make me very unhappy. My aunt would be offended, too. You used to say you liked her German cookies, and it pleased her so much. Suppose we say next Tuesday. You do not go to Washington until the last of the week."

Fräulein was so very urgent that it really seemed impossible to refuse her invitation without being rude, and, as Gretel had no wish to hurt her old friend's feelings, she finally gave a rather half-hearted consent, and the engagement was made for the following Tuesday afternoon.

"If anything should happen to prevent, I

will either write or telephone," Gretel added, by way of a proviso.

"Certainly, but you must not let anything prevent. My aunt is very fond of you, and she does not like many people."

Gretel was a little surprised to hear this, for on the one or two occasions when she had gone to tea at Fräulein's aunt's, that lady—a stout German with a dull, placid expression, had not appeared to take any particular notice of her. Indeed, Fräulein had once confided in German that her aunt was "Good, but dull."

"They must care a great deal more about each other than they used to," she reflected, as she stood for a moment on the steps, watching her friend pass out of sight. "I suppose the war has drawn them together. It must be very hard for Germans in this country, and I do feel sorry for them, but I can't help wishing Fräulein hadn't urged me so much to come to tea."

Mr. Douaine was leaning back in an armchair, comfortably sipping his second glass of iced tea, when Gretel returned. He cer-

tainly did look tired and a little troubled as well.

"Come and sit down, little girl," he said, kindly. "I am glad that friend of yours is afraid of thunder-storms. I want you to myself for a little while."

"She—she is very pleasant, don't you think so?" faltered loyal Gretel, as she took the seat by her brother's side.

"I have no doubt she can be very pleasant when she feels inclined," Mr. Douaine answered, smiling. "She is a trifle too German to suit my taste, but that isn't her fault. I don't think she took to me any more than I took to her."

"She did seem rather stiff," Gretel admitted. "Perhaps the thunder in the air made her nervous. She was awfully good to me at school, and I really am fond of her."

"Certainly you are fond of her, and there is no reason why you should not be. I dare say she is all right, but—well, the fact is, I am afraid I am prejudiced. One hears such

dreadful things about the Germans in these days."

"Percy," said Gretel, with a catch in her voice, "if Father were alive, do you believe he would approve of the things the Germans have done?"

"No, Gretel, I do not," her brother answered, decidedly. "Your father was one of the best men I have ever known in my life."

Gretel gave a long sigh of intense relief.

"I am so glad you feel that way, too," she said, softly. "I was always quite sure myself, but one of the girls at school ——"

"You don't mean that some one has been making you uncomfortable on account of your father!" exclaimed Mr. Douaine, indignantly, as Gretel paused in some embarrassment. "Such a thing would be simply outrageous."

"Oh, no," said Gretel, "at least perhaps she didn't mean to make me uncomfortable. Almost every one has been kind, the Mintons, and all the teachers, even Madame. Most of the girls are kind, too, but Ada Godfrey hates the Germans more than the rest, because her

uncle was drowned on the *Lusitania.* But, Percy, I can't help being very sorry for the Germans in this country. They didn't cause the war, and people are so unkind to them. Fräulein was dreadfully unhappy at school."

"I have no doubt there are many loyal Germans here," said Mr. Douaine, "and some of them have probably been treated most unjustly, but I am afraid the few must suffer for the faults of the many. Since I have been in Washington I have learned many things, which I would scarcely have believed possible six months ago. I have no objection to your seeing your German friend, especially if it gives you both pleasure, but I wouldn't advise you to be very intimate. But, hark! isn't that a car stopping? It must be Barbara." And Mr. Douaine hurried away to greet his wife, leaving his sister looking unusually grave and troubled.

Gretel was still looking grave when she returned to her own room. Her brother's words, kind though they had been, had revealed his knowledge of, and belief in, something of

which she had read, and heard people talk, but had never believed herself. Was it possible that people—her own father's people—could be disloyal to the country of their adoption? Certainly Fräulein had said some strange things, but then Fräulein was so excitable.

She found Dora waiting for her in her room.

"Oh, Miss Gretel," began the maid eagerly, "I've had such a surprise. Who do you think is down-stairs in the kitchen?"

"I have no idea," said Gretel, smiling. "Not Peter?"

"Yes, Peter. They gave the boys a holiday, and Peter came up from the camp this afternoon. He's been to see Mother, and just stopped in here for a minute on his way back. He looks just grand in his uniform."

"I should love to see him," said Gretel. "Has he the time to spare?"

"Yes, Miss, and he's crazy to see you, and say good-bye. He thinks the regiment may be sent over very soon."

"I'll come right down," said Gretel, good-naturedly, and three minutes later, she was

shaking hands with a tall, red-haired youth in the uniform of a United States Private.

"I am so glad you waited to see me," she said. "Why, Peter, how fine you look, and how you have grown!"

In his pleasure and embarrassment, Peter blushed until his cheeks were as red as his hair. He stammered out something about hoping he hadn't been too bold, and shook Gretel's hand as if it were a pump-handle.

"Bold!" cried Gretel, indignantly; "what nonsense! I should never have forgiven you if you had gone away without bidding me good-bye. Why, Peter, think what old friends we are. Do you remember the cream puffs, and how you recognized me the day I was run over?"

Peter grinned.

"That was a good while ago," he said. "I was a kid then."

"You are not so very old yet," said Gretel, and there was a tremor in her voice. "Oh, Peter, I am sorry you are going. Of course I am proud of you for wanting to, but ——"

"I'm all right," interrupted Peter, gruffly, but blushing more than ever. "All the fellows are crazy to go. A lot of them got turned down, but they accepted me because of my size. Don't you worry, Miss Gretel, or Dora either. We'll come back all right, and if we don't lick them Germans before the year's out, my name's not Peter Grubb."

Peter paused abruptly, warned by a glance from his sister, and suddenly grew very much embarrassed.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Gretel," he said, awkwardly. "I didn't mean to say anything about them, but you see ——"

"I know how you all feel," said Gretel, blushing in her turn. "My father was a German, but I know he would not have approved of this terrible war. I am sure there must be other good Germans, who feel as he would have felt."

"Maybe there are," Peter admitted, reluctantly, "but they've got to be licked all the same. I guess I've got to go now; we were told to be back at camp before nine."

A lump rose in Gretel's throat, as she held out her hand to her old friend. Peter was the first person she knew who was actually going to the war. What if she were never to see him again? She had read of the dead and wounded lying in the trenches for days. Oh, war was very, very terrible.

"Good-bye, Peter," she said; "you are a brave boy, and—and—God bless you, Peter, and bring you back safely."

Gretel was crying softly when she went upstairs, leaving Dora to have a few last words with her brother. She was very quiet at dinner, although Percy and Barbara did their best to make her first evening at home a pleasant one. She could not banish the vision of Peter's bright, confident young face. She had never before thought of freckled, red-haired Peter Grubb without a smile, but to-night her old playmate had suddenly appeared in the character of a hero. How many brave young heroes there were, all going, like Peter, with light, confident hearts, "to lick the Germans." They would not all come back. It was a very

hot, sultry evening, and they sat in the drawing-room with all the windows open, chatting pleasantly, but always with that strange, new undercurrent of sadness. Once the silence of the quiet street was broken by the shrill cry of an Extra. Mr. Douaine bought the paper, which told of a German victory, and of a long list of casualties. By and by Mr. Douaine asked for some music, and his wife went to the piano. For a few moments her fingers wandered idly over the keys, and then she began to play. At the first notes Gretel's heart gave a great bound, and the grateful tears started to her eyes. Barbara was playing her father's Sonata, and Gretel knew that it was for her sake.

"How good she is," the girl said to herself; "oh, how good she and Percy have always been to me!"

Later, Gretel took her turn at the piano, and as usual, forgot everything else in the music she loved, but when she had kissed her brother and his wife good-night, and found Dora waiting for her in her room, she remem-

bered Peter again, and the troubled look came back to her eyes. Dora's own eyes were red, but she was smiling proudly.

"Didn't the kid look fine?" she inquired eagerly, as she unfastened Gretel's dress.

"Yes, indeed he did," responded Gretel, heartily; "I don't wonder you are proud of him, Dora. He looks years older than when I saw him last Christmas. Do you think he realizes what it all means? He is so young, you know."

"Yes, Miss, I think he does," said Dora, with unusual gravity. "He doesn't talk much about such things—boys don't, you know—but just the last minute before he left, he kissed me, a thing he hasn't done since he was a little fellow, and said, 'If I shouldn't ever come back, Dora, you'll take care of Mother, won't you?' He said it so serious, and there was a look on his face that most broke my heart to see, but I was proud of him all the same."

Gretel fell asleep thinking of Peter, and awoke with a start, aroused by a heavy peal of thunder. The storm, which had been

threatening all the evening, had broken at last, and rain was pouring in torrents. Gretel sat up in bed, shaking from head to foot. Then came a bright flash of lightning, followed by another peal of thunder, and she lay down again, with a sigh of relief.

"It's only a thunder-storm," she murmured; "oh, I'm so glad. I thought for a minute it might be—oh, if the Germans in this country should do anything terrible, as they have done in France and England! I wonder what Percy meant when he said he had found out things in Washington."

CHAPTER V

OFF FOR NEW LONDON

It was on the following Monday morning that the invitation came. Gretel found it awaiting her on the breakfast table, and at once recognized Molly Chester's rather straggly handwriting. Mr. Douaine had returned to Washington the previous day, and Gretel and her sister-in-law were alone at breakfast.

"Who is your correspondent, dear?" Mrs. Douaine asked, glancing up from her own pile of letters, at the sound of an exclamation from Gretel.

"Molly Chester," Gretel answered. "She wants me to visit her this week. May I read her letter to you?"

"Yes, do. I like Molly; she is such a genuine, unaffected girl. My own mail isn't a bit

interesting this morning; nothing but bills and appeals for war charities."

"It's a wonderful invitation," said Gretel, "but I don't know whether I ought to go away just now when you are so busy, and I might be some help in the packing."

"Let us hear what Molly says, at any rate," said Mrs. Douaine, as she poured her coffee, and Gretel began to read:

"DEAREST GRETEL:

"I am in a frightful hurry, as I want to post this letter on the way to church, so please excuse an awful scrawl, but I simply can't wait another minute, because there isn't any time to spare.

"Mother wants to know if you can come to us this week Tuesday, and stay until after the Fourth. Kitty is coming, and I am writing to ask Geraldine and her brother. I know she won't stir in vacation without her twin, and my brother Paul has taken a tremendous fancy to Jerry Barlow. You know they both go to Groton, and although Paul is only twelve, it seems Jerry has been awfully good to him, so Paul is just wild to have Jerry asked for a visit. I am sure we four girls can have lots of fun together, so be sure to come, and send me a telegram, saying you will meet Father at

the Grand Central on Tuesday afternoon, in time to take the three o'clock train for New London. I know your family don't like to have you travel by yourself, and that is why we decided on Tuesday, as Father doesn't expect to be in town again next week.

"It seems rather soon to ask you to visit me, when school only closed last Thursday, but Mother expects a lot of visitors in July, and in August I expect to go to my Aunt Maud's at Magnolia. I do hope you won't mind leaving your family so soon, but it really can't be helped. If they make a fuss about letting you go, tell them you can be with them all the rest of the summer, and I really must have you now.

"I have seen Ada once since I came here. The Godfreys have a lovely place right out on the Point. I haven't been inside the house yet, but expect to soon, for Mrs. Godfrey has organized a branch of the Red Cross, and we are to meet at her house two mornings a week. Ada is tremendously excited over the naval station and the submarine base. We see sailors everywhere, and yesterday afternoon a submarine did 'stunts' right in front of our place. It was very interesting to watch, but I must say, I shouldn't have liked to be on board. My Cousin Stephen dined with us last evening, and brought a friend with him—a nice boy from Virginia, who speaks with a fascinating Southern accent.

"Mother is calling me to hurry, so I must close. Be sure not to disappoint me by saying you can't come on Tuesday, and, with heaps of love, believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"MOLLY CHESTER."

"I would love to go," said Gretel, "but I wish Molly had asked me for later in the summer."

"I think, on the whole, that this may be rather the best time for you to go," said Mrs. Douaine. "You will be spared that long journey from Washington, and by the time you join us there, we shall be all settled. Percy expects to be going back and forth between New York and Washington all summer, so I am sure we can arrange to have you meet him here at the end of your visit. Do you suppose the Barlows will go?"

As if in answer to Mrs. Douaine's question, the butler appeared at that moment, to announce that Miss Gretel was wanted on the telephone. Gretel hurried away, returning in a few moments with the joyful news that Jerry and Geraldine were both going to accept

Molly's invitation, and would be ready to join Mr. Chester at the station on Tuesday afternoon.

"Geraldine says she wouldn't have gone if they hadn't asked Jerry, too," Gretel added, laughing. "I wonder if all twins are as devoted as the Barlows?"

"Well, then, it is all settled, I suppose," said Mrs. Douaine, "so we may as well get that telegram off to Molly as soon as possible. I am glad you are going to have a couple of weeks of sea air before settling down to the Washington heat."

The day that followed was a very busy one. Mrs. Douaine good-naturedly put aside all her own many engagements, and devoted herself and her time to Gretel's affairs. There was a delightful shopping expedition in the morning, which resulted in the purchase of various additions to Gretel's wardrobe, including a pretty sport suit, and a jaunty sailor hat.

"It seems as if I had about everything in the world that a girl could possibly want," said Gretel, gratefully, as they left the mil-

liner's shop. "Do you really think you ought to spend any more money on me just now, when so many people are suffering?"

Gretel was very much in earnest, but Mrs. Douaine declared that she was not spending any more money than she considered necessary, and Gretel, who was a very human girl, after all, and loved pretty clothes, stifled her scruples, and thoroughly enjoyed the morning's shopping. In the afternoon they attended a bazaar in aid of the Belgian sufferers, and in the evening Mrs. Douaine took her sister-in-law to hear a French woman talk of her work in the devastated regions. The next morning there was Gretel's trunk to be packed, and a few last purchases to be made, and almost before she realized it, the girl found herself in the car with her sister-in-law, on the way to the station.

"Wasn't that Dora's sister I saw you talking with in the hall?" Mrs. Douaine asked, as she settled back in the car for a short rest.

"Yes," said Gretel, "it was Lillie. She

came to tell Dora they had received a postal from Peter. His ship is off. You know the boys are only allowed to notify their families after they have sailed. Poor Lillie was quite upset. She is devoted to Peter."

"Poor boy," said Mrs. Douaine, with a sigh; "he seems so young to go. I am surprised that his father did not prevent it. He's under age."

"He isn't seventeen yet," said Gretel, the tears starting to her eyes. "Oh, Barbara, it seems almost wicked to be going away to have a good time, when so many people we know are in such dreadful trouble. I almost wish I wasn't going."

"Don't be morbid, dear," Mrs. Douaine said, kindly, laying her hand on Gretel's as she spoke. "Remember Dr. Townsend's sermon last Sunday. We must keep sane; it is the only way to help. I want you to be just as cheerful and happy as you can on this visit. We none of us know what may be before us, and we must be strong and ready to bear whatever may happen, but in the meantime there is

no reason why we should not be reasonably happy."

Gretel felt somehow comforted by her sister-in-law's words, and it was a very bright face which greeted the Barlow twins and their mother at the station. They had been watching for her at the entrance to the big waiting-room.

Mrs. Barlow was a pale, nervous little woman, and when Gretel and her sister-in-law arrived, she was in the midst of a long list of admonitions to the twins, who, truth to tell, were not paying very much attention to their mother's warnings.

"You will be careful about bathing, won't you, Jerry?" she pleaded, "and promise me not to swim out too far? I am so afraid of those motor-boats, too. I know the Chesters must have one, so many people do. I wish you would promise not to go in it, but I suppose there isn't any use asking you to. Aren't you afraid of motor-boats, Barbara?" she added, turning to Mrs. Douaine.

"Not a bit," her friend answered, cheer-

fully. "Besides, both the twins swim like fish, so why worry? I am sure the Chesters will take good care of their guests."

Mrs. Barlow looked somewhat relieved, but not altogether satisfied.

"I hate to have the children go away again so soon," she complained. "I never would have given my consent if Mr. Barlow hadn't been so busy with war work that I don't see much prospect of our getting out of town for ages."

"I do wish Mother hadn't given up Mental Science," Geraldine whispered to Gretel. "We were all so comfortable while she was a Mental Scientist. She gave it up after Jerry had pneumonia. She said he never would have had it if she had taken better care of him, and made him wear rubbers in bad weather. Oh, here comes Mr. Chester. I saw him at Molly's party last Christmas." And Gretel hurried forward to announce their arrival to her friend's father.

Mr. Chester, a gray-haired gentleman with spectacles, greeted the party very pleasantly, and after a few moments of chatting with the

ladies, carried the three young people off to the waiting train. As they passed through the ticket gate, Mrs. Barlow's last "Now do be sure to take good care of yourselves, children," was still ringing in their ears.

It was just as the train was moving out of the station that a sudden recollection caused Gretel to utter an exclamation of dismay.

"Good gracious!" she gasped. "I forgot all about Fräulein."

"What about her?" inquired Geraldine in surprise.

"Why, I was to have gone to tea at her aunt's this afternoon. I never once thought of it since Molly's invitation came. Oh, what shall I do?"

"I don't see that you can do anything about it except write a note, telling her you are sorry you forgot," said Geraldine. "Don't look as if something tragic had happened. It isn't such a terrible crime to forget an invitation to afternoon tea."

"I think it is rather tragic, though," said Gretel, smiling ruefully. "I ought to have

telephoned yesterday. Fräulein is so sensitive; she will be sure to think I did it on purpose. The worst of it is, I really didn't want to go in the first place, and I am afraid she noticed it."

"Well, it can't be helped now, anyway," said cheerful Geraldine. "You can write a note this evening, and she'll have it to-morrow. Isn't it great to be off on a journey by ourselves, and going to Molly's? I'd rather visit Molly Chester than any girl I know except you. Wasn't it dear of them to ask Jerry?"

Gretel said no more on the subject, but she still looked rather grave and troubled. She had a very kind heart, and the thought of having hurt any one's feelings by any carelessness or neglect of her own, was really painful to her. But it was impossible to resist the high spirits of the Barlow twins, and she was soon chatting and laughing as much as any of the party. The journey proved a very pleasant one, for Mr. Chester was a most agreeable traveling companion. He seemed what Ger-

aldine described in a letter to her mother, "A very understanding person." He told amusing stories, bought chocolates from the man who sold candy on the train, and treated them all to ginger-ale from the dining-car. Before they reached their destination, Jerry had confided to his sister that their host was "a jolly good sort," and that he considered Paul Chester a mighty lucky fellow to have "such a sport" for his father.

It was six o'clock when they reached New London, and found Molly waiting for them at the station.

"This is just too nice for words," she exclaimed, leading the way to the Chesters' big touring-car, after giving her friends a rapturous greeting. "I was so afraid you wouldn't be able to come at such short notice. Kitty is coming to-morrow. Her family are going to motor her over from Stockbridge. You have no idea how excited Paul is about your coming, Jerry. He would have been at the station, but he has to study with a tutor every afternoon from four to six. He had scarlet

fever in the spring, you know, and it put him back in his lessons."

The Barlows had been to New London before, but it was Gretel's first visit to the old town, and she looked about her with eager eyes, as the car rolled through the narrow streets.

"I love the salt, fishy smell," she declared. "It makes me think of ships, and traveling, and all sorts of interesting things."

"I hope you don't think it's all as ugly as this," said Molly. "It's quite different out at the Point, where our house is."

It certainly was quite different, and as they turned in at the Chesters' gate, and saw the beautiful harbor lying almost at their feet, not only Gretel, but the twins as well, uttered an exclamation of delight.

"I didn't know any house could be quite so close to the water," said Gretel. "Why, one could almost throw a stone off the piazza into the harbor."

"Is that a battle-ship right out there?" Jerry inquired, with deep interest.

"Yes," said Molly. "She has been there since yesterday, and it's very interesting, for we can hear the bells on board, and the bugle calls, too, and see the sailors drilling. There are Mother and Paul on the piazza."

Mrs. Chester was a bright, sweet-faced woman, with a cordial, winning manner, which put people at their ease at once, and her greeting to the three guests was so hearty that, even if they had been disposed to feel shy, their shyness would have been speedily dispelled. Jerry was promptly carried off to the third floor by Paul Chester, a bright-looking boy of twelve, and his younger brother Frank, and Molly took her two girl friends to their room.

"We are going to have you room together," she said, pausing at the door of a large, pleasant room on the second floor. "The house isn't very large, so we have to double up. Kitty will room with me, and Paul is to be with the boys in their own special sanctum up-stairs. There is another guest-room, but we are expecting Aunt Dulcie on Saturday."

"Is that the aunt who writes books?" Gretel asked.

"Yes, and she is the dearest person in the world. I know you will both be crazy about her. She is Stephen's mother, you know, and she is coming here so as to be near him while he is at the naval station. She is so full of fun, and so interested in everything we do, you would never suppose she was so awfully clever."

"Mother has just been reading her new book," said Geraldine—"the one that went into so many editions, you know—and she said it was wonderful. I have never met a real author in my life, have you, Gretel?"

"No," said Gretel, "but I have met a good many musicians, and they are not very different from other people, so I don't suppose authors are, either, when one gets to know them. I shall be very glad to meet Molly's aunt, for everybody says her books are delightful."

"How far is the Godfreys' house from here?" Geraldine inquired, going over to the

open window for another look out on that fascinating harbor.

"Only a few houses away," Molly answered, "but you can't see it from here. Ada stopped in for a minute this morning, to find out if you girls were coming. You will see her to-morrow when we go over there to do Red Cross work. Mother said she was sure you wouldn't mind helping."

"Of course we won't mind," declared Geraldine, and Gretel added:

"I am so glad there is some work we can do."

"Oh, there is plenty to do," Molly assured her. "Everybody is doing something. One old lady knitted all through the sermon last Sunday, and the clergyman didn't object at all. They say he gave out in church a few Sundays ago that if the ladies wanted to knit during the service, he was quite willing, but Mother says if we work in the mornings we may have the afternoons free to do just what we like. She thinks we are entitled to a little fun after studying so hard all winter. Now I

am going to leave you to wash up while I change my dress for dinner. We dine at seven, and Steve is coming over from the naval station. I'm crazy to have you both meet him; he is such an old dear."

"Aren't you glad you're here, Gretel?" exclaimed Geraldine, drawing in a long breath of the delicious salt breeze, as she joined her friend at the window a few minutes later. "It reminds me a little bit of Old Point, doesn't it you?"

"A little, but not very much. Geraldine, do you suppose the men on that ship out there really want to give their lives for their country?"

"I don't know, but I suppose a good many of them do. How plainly we can see them. It's very interesting, but if we were Germans I don't suppose we would be allowed to come here. We might find out things, you know. I read in the paper the other day that the Germans are to be debarred from all waterfronts."

Gretel was silent, but stood gazing out over

the water to the opposite shore. It was all very lovely and peaceful, but those men on the battle-ship—were they going to kill and be killed? Involuntarily she gave a little shudder.

"What's the matter?" Geraldine inquired in surprise.

"Nothing, only—Geraldine, I'm afraid I'm a dreadful coward."

"Nonsense," laughed Geraldine. "Jerry wouldn't have any use for a coward, and he thinks you the nicest girl he knows. What ever put such a silly idea into your head?"

"I don't know. I hope I should be brave when the time came, but if I had a father or brother going to the war, I don't believe I could bear it. Why, even saying good-bye to Peter Grubb made me terribly unhappy. I don't like even to think of those strange sailors out there going to fight. I've been a coward all my life about everything. Why, don't you remember when I was a little girl, and found out that I had taken Barbara's opera ticket, I

was afraid to confess, but wrote a silly letter, and tried to run away."

"You were only a kid then," said Geraldine. "A kid might do anything silly. You may think you're a coward, and perhaps you aren't very brave in little things, but if anything really big ever happened, and you had to show courage, I am perfectly certain you'd be all right. Here comes the express wagon with our trunks. I'm so glad, for now we shall be able to change our dresses before dinner."

CHAPTER VI

AT THE CHESTERS'

THE Chester family were all gathered on the broad piazza when Gretel and Geraldine came down-stairs dressed for dinner. Jerry had also reappeared and was deeply absorbed in conversation with Paul and Frank on the subject of various kinds of fish bait. Molly was the eldest of the four children, the boys came next, and the youngest, Daisy, was a pretty golden-haired child of five, who, at the present moment, was comfortably settled on her father's knee, listening entranced to a story about a princess and a dwarf.

"Father always tells her a story before bedtime," Molly told her friends. "I'm afraid we all spoil her dreadfully, but she is so much younger than the rest of us, and it was such a joy to have a baby in the house again."

"I am glad her name is Daisy," said Geral-

dine. "When I was little my two great unfulfilled desires were that my name should be Daisy, and that I should have golden curls. I hope your little sister will make friends with me; I adore babies."

"Oh, she will, never fear. You may find her altogether too friendly before you have been here many days. Her real name is Margaret. She was named for a sister of Mother's, who died when she was a young girl, but she was always called Daisy, so our baby is Daisy, too."

At that moment the story came to an end, and Miss Daisy was sent off to bed, much against her will, and then dinner was announced, and they all rose to go indoors, Mrs. Chester remarking that there was no use in waiting for Stephen, as just as likely as not he might not be able to get off at all.

"He did get off, though, for here he comes," said Molly, as the sound of an approaching automobile fell upon their ears, and in another moment a small two-seated car had turned in at the gate.

Molly had talked so much about this cousin of hers that it was not surprising that Gretel and Geraldine both felt considerable curiosity about him. Indeed, Geraldine had privately informed Gretel while they were dressing for dinner that she was quite prepared to be disappointed in him, because people one heard so much about generally did prove disappointing. But when the tall young ensign sprang from the car, and came bounding up the steps, even Geraldine was forced to admit that Molly had not said too much in his favor. He certainly was one of the handsomest, most distinguished-looking young men she had ever seen.

Stephen Cranston was the son of a sister of Mrs. Chester's, and as they were very devoted, their children had been brought up almost like brothers and sisters. Consequently, Stephen was very much at home in his aunt's house, and not only never hesitated to descend upon the family at any moment himself, but frequently brought a friend or two along as well. He had a friend with him this evening, an-

other young ensign of about his own age, who appeared to be already known to the Chesters, and was presented as Mr. Jimmy Fairfax of Virginia.

Mr. Jimmy Fairfax was not so good-looking as his friend, but he had a pleasant, refined face, and spoke with a delightful Southern accent, which at once captivated Geraldine. Mrs. Chester greeted both guests cordially, and Molly hastened to present her two friends.

"These are the girls I told you I was expecting," she said; "Geraldine Barlow and Gretel Schiller."

At the name Gretel Schiller, young Fairfax gave a slight start, and Gretel noticed that he looked at her rather keenly as they shook hands.

"It's because of my German name," she told herself uncomfortably, but the young man's manner was perfectly calm and polite, and she soon recovered from her slight embarrassment. In the meantime Stephen was saying in a teasing undertone to his cousin:

"So you've got your little Pumpernickel friend here at last."

Molly flushed indignantly, but before she could reply, Mrs. Chester called them all to come in to dinner.

The Chesters were charming hosts, and before dinner was over all their guests were feeling very much at home. Even Jerry—who was generally painfully shy with strangers—quite forgot to be embarrassed, and found himself sending Molly—who sat next to him—off into irrepressible giggles over the story of a school scrap, in which he had figured as one of the chief delinquents. They were all so happy and merry; there was nothing but the uniforms of the two young men to remind them that things were not all as they used to be. But it was impossible to keep the conversation altogether away from the war, and before the meal was half over Mr. Chester and Stephen were discussing submarines and the possibility of a German blockade.

"Not much danger," Stephen declared confidently. "When Uncle Sam once takes a

hand things are pretty sure to go right." At which piece of "Americanism" everybody laughed except Gretel, who suddenly became aware of the fact that Mr. Jimmy Fairfax was looking at her again in that same sharp, almost suspicious manner that she had noticed once before.

"He doesn't like me," she said to herself. "I suppose he's one of those people who hate everything German."

Just then her ear was caught by something Molly was saying to her cousin.

"Is it true, Steve, that they have passed a law forbidding Germans to come near the water-fronts?"

"Quite true, and a very good thing, too," young Cranston answered. "It's about time we began to look after things a little better in this country. We have been altogether too lenient. I don't suppose people have any idea of the amount of spy work that has been going on right under our very noses."

Gretel remembered what her brother had

told her, and, for some unaccountable reason, her heart began to beat rather uncomfortably fast. It was foolish, of course, but somehow she couldn't help being almost glad she had not been able to keep that appointment with Fräulein.

After dinner they all went out on the piazza and watched the lights in the harbor until some one proposed to sail up the river in the motor-boat. The suggestion was eagerly accepted, and in less than ten minutes the whole party, with the exception of Mrs. Chester, who was tired, and Frank, who, being only eleven, was still considered too young to be up after nine o'clock, were gliding up the river in the Chesters' comfortable launch.

"This is the Thames, where they have the big Harvard-Yale boat-race every June," Molly told Gretel. "There won't be any race this year, though, on account of the war. Steve was on the Harvard crew last year, and it was tremendously exciting."

Gretel could not repress a sigh. Those

boys seemed so young, so much more fitted for college boat-races than for the grim work of war.

"Were you sorry to leave college?" she asked Stephen, impulsively.

"Sorry!" cried the young man; "you bet I wasn't sorry. I've been wild to get into this war ever since the invasion of Belgium. It's about time we Americans did something to lick the Germans."

"Take care what you say, Steve," warned his friend from the opposite seat. "Miss Schiller may not care to hear about licking Germans."

The words were courteous, but the tone reminded Gretel of Ada Godfrey's. She opened her lips to speak, but before she could utter a word Jerry's clear treble had broken in on the conversation.

"Gretel isn't any more German than you are, even if she has got a German name," he declared. "She's just as good an American as any of us; aren't you, Gretel?"

"Yes," said Gretel; "at least I hope I am.

My father was a German, though," she added truthfully.

"Well, he's been dead for ever so long," maintained Jerry, "and, anyhow, he wasn't like these Germans nowadays. I've seen his picture, and he looks so kind you wouldn't believe he could hurt a fly."

"He was kind," said Gretel, a little tremulously. "He was one of the best and kindest men who ever lived."

Nobody spoke for a moment, and there was a rather uncomfortable pause, which Mr. Chester broke by asking Jimmy Fairfax a question on some irrelevant subject. They were soon chatting pleasantly again, but several members of the party did not forget the little incident.

"Well, how do you like Steve?" demanded Molly, coming into her friend's room when their guests had left and they all had gone upstairs. "Did I say too much about his good looks?"

"Not one bit too much," Geraldine assured her. "He's one of the handsomest boys I

have ever seen. I like him, too; he's so pleasant and doesn't treat me like a kid, just because my hair isn't up yet. Didn't you like him, Gretel?"

"Very much, indeed," responded Gretel, with a vivid recollection of the kind, understanding look Stephen Cranston had given her as he helped her out of the motor-boat.

"And the best of it is," continued Molly, "Steve is just as nice as he looks. He takes after his mother. Wait till you see Aunt Dulcie."

"She's a widow, isn't she?" inquired Geraldine, who had heard something of Molly's literary aunt.

"Yes; Stephen is her only child. Her husband died when Steve was a little boy, and he and his mother are everything to each other. Uncle George didn't leave much money, and at first Aunt Dulcie had a rather hard time. She had to keep house for Uncle George's father, who was a very cross, disagreeable old gentleman, and things were quite horrid, but Mother says Aunt Dulcie never once lost her

grit. Of course, Mother and Aunt Maud helped her all they could, but Aunt Dulcie was very proud, and she hated taking things from people, even her own sisters. It was a long time before the publishers realized how talented she was, but now they are all crazy to get her things, and I saw in a newspaper last spring that she is spoken of as one of the leading novelists of the day. Steve is tremendously proud of his mother, as, indeed, we all are."

"It must be terribly hard for your aunt to let her son go to the war," said Gretel.

"Of course it is, frightfully hard, but Aunt Dulcie isn't the kind of person to shirk what she considers her duty. I believe she would rather see Steve dead than have him not want to go. Her eyes look dreadfully sad sometimes, but she's always so bright and full of fun that strangers wouldn't suppose she had a care in the world. You'll see what I mean when she comes."

"It must be wonderful to be brave," remarked Gretel, breaking a rather long silence,

when Molly had gone away to her own room and she and Geraldine were preparing for bed. "I'm afraid I could never be like that aunt of Molly's."

"We never know what we may do till we are tried," said Geraldine, practically. "If a time ever comes when you have to be brave I guess you'll manage all right. But I don't see any use of worrying about things that may never happen."

Gretel laughed in spite of herself. Geraldine always did her good when she was disposed to be sentimental or morbid.

"I don't believe you ever worry about anything," she said a little wistfully.

"No, I don't," returned Geraldine. "Mother worries enough for the whole family put together. What are you going to do now? Not write a letter at this time of night? It's long after ten."

"I must write just a few lines to Fräulein," said Gretel. "I'm afraid she thinks me very rude. I would like to get my letter off in the morning mail."

"Oh, yes; I suppose you will have to explain," said Geraldine, yawning. "Don't make it too long, though, for I'm sleepy, and I never can get to sleep till the light is out."

"Shall I say you send your love?" Gretel asked, as she seated herself at the desk and selected a pen and a sheet of note paper.

Geraldine hesitated.

"You can say I send kindest remembrances," she compromised. "I hate sending love to people I really don't love at all."

Gretel laughed.

"No one can ever accuse you of being anything but honest, Geraldine," she said. "Poor old Fräulein; I really don't see why you never cared more about her. It does worry me to think I should have forgotten about this afternoon."

Notwithstanding her "worrying," however, Gretel slept very well, and awoke next morning quite ready to enjoy life.

"We have to spend the morning working for the Red Cross," Molly explained at breakfast, "but this afternoon we can bathe and

either play tennis or go for a motor ride. Kitty wrote she wouldn't be here before six, at any rate. It's a long ride from Stockbridge over here. Her family are going to spend a couple of weeks at Narragansett and will drop her here as they go through."

It was a lovely summer morning, and soon after breakfast Mrs. Chester and the three girls started for the Red Cross meeting at the Godfreys'. A five minutes' walk brought them to the house, which, like the Chesters', was close to the water. Ada was watching from the piazza, and came running across the lawn to greet her friends.

"I am so glad you were able to come," she said, kissing Geraldine affectionately. "I am going to have a house party next week, and there's lots of fun going on. Did Molly tell you about the dance at The Griswold on the Fourth? Mother says I can go and take my party, and Mrs. Chester is going to take all of you. They say a lot of boys from the naval station will be there, and it will be very gay."

Ada's manner was very cordial, but sensi-

tive Gretel could not help fancying that there was a difference in her manner when she turned from Geraldine to herself, and particularly when presenting her to her mother as "my friend, Gretel Schiller."

Mrs. Godfrey, a stout, energetic woman, with a loud, decided voice, received the visitors kindly, and the girls were introduced to several other ladies who had already arrived for the morning's work. More people appeared, and they were soon all busy folding bandages and making surgical dressings.

Gretel was skillful with her fingers and eager to learn, and before the morning was over she had won golden opinions from many of the workers. It would all have been very pleasant if Mrs. Godfrey and one of the other ladies had not begun entertaining the party with stories of German atrocities, ending in what they both declared to be a true account of ground glass having been found in some surgical dressings which had been sent in by a branch of the Red Cross.

"Of course, some German did it," Ada's

mother stated positively. "People should be more careful whom they allow to work. I have heard of one branch who will not accept any work done by a person even having a German name."

Gretel felt her cheeks tingle, but kept her eyes steadily bent on her work, and so quite failed to notice the quick, warning glance that Ada cast at her mother. But the next words she heard were in Mrs. Chester's kind voice.

"That seems to me a little unfair. Many people with German names are quite as good Americans as we are."

"I wouldn't trust one of them," declared another lady, who, to do her justice, had no idea there was any one present having a German name. And she immediately launched forth into another story of German treachery, if possible, even more shocking than the last.

"Well, it wasn't so bad, after all, was it?" remarked Molly, cheerfully, as they were walking home to luncheon.

"I liked it," said Geraldine. "It's nice to feel we are doing something, even if it's only

a little. I'm afraid I was very stupid and clumsy, though. You did wonderfully, Gretel."

"She did, indeed," chimed in Mrs. Chester. "Is this your first experience, Gretel?"

Gretel admitted modestly that it was.

"Gretel is very clever," said Molly. "You should have seen the socks she knit at school. I suppose it's Ger —— I mean some people are cleverer with their fingers than others."

As they approached the house Gretel fell behind with Mrs. Chester, while Molly and Geraldine hurried on to join the boys, who were just finishing an exciting game of tennis. There was something she felt she must say, but it was not easy to begin.

"Do you play tennis?" Mrs. Chester asked, merely for the sake of saying something, for she noticed that the girl looked troubled.

"Yes, a little, but—but, Mrs. Chester, may I ask you something?"

"Certainly, dear; anything you like," said Mrs. Chester, kindly. "What is it?"

"It's about—about what those ladies were

talking of," faltered Gretel, with crimson cheeks. "Do you believe any German really did that dreadful thing—about the ground glass, you know?"

"I try not to believe such stories," Mrs. Chester answered gravely. "I know that many of them are entirely untrue and others grossly exaggerated. Still, dreadful things have undoubtedly happened."

"I know," said Gretel, simply. "I have been thinking of what Mrs. Godfrey said about people with German names. Perhaps they would rather not have me work with them. I shouldn't like to do anything that would make you or Molly uncomfortable."

"My dear child, you surely don't attach any importance to such foolish talk!" said Mrs. Chester, smiling. "We all know that many of our most loyal citizens have German names."

Gretel looked very much relieved.

"Thank you," she said, earnestly. "I was just a little afraid——" she did not finish her sentence, for at that moment Molly called to

them that it was only half-past twelve, and if they hurried there would be time for a sea bath before luncheon.

The afternoon that followed was a very pleasant one, and in her healthy enjoyment of her new surroundings Gretel soon forgot the discomfort of the morning. They did not see the Godfreys again that day, but Kitty Sharp arrived in time for dinner, and the four friends spent a very merry evening together. Mrs. Chester had heard of Gretel's music, and after dinner she asked her to play, which the girl was always pleased to do, and for nearly an hour she sat at the piano, playing the dear old things she loved, while Mr. and Mrs. Chester listened with real pleasure and admiration.

"You are a very talented young lady," Mr. Chester said, smiling kindly, as Gretel rose from the piano. "Very few girls of your age play as well as you do. You must have had excellent teachers."

"I have studied for the past three years at school," said Gretel, "but my father gave me

my first lessons before I was six. I always feel as if I owe everything I know to him."

"Your father was a great musician," said Mrs. Chester; "you have reason to be proud of him."

"I am proud of him," said Gretel, with shining eyes, and she suddenly felt happier than she had done all day.

"I like that little girl, Molly," Mr. Chester said to his wife, when Gretel had gone to join her friends on the piazza. "There is something so honest and straightforward about her, and she is remarkably modest for a girl with so much talent."

"Poor child," sighed Mrs. Chester; "I am afraid she is painfully sensitive. Some of the women at the Red Cross meeting to-day were telling stories of those horrible atrocities—you know the sort of thing I mean—and Gretel evidently took them very much to heart. It really is unfortunate that she should have such an unmistakably German name."

"Come and listen to the music," said Molly, as Gretel stepped out on to the cool piazza.

"The men on the battle-ship are singing war songs, and we can hear them quite plainly; it's so still to-night. They've just finished 'The Long, Long Trail.'"

It was very still, as Molly had said, and in a few moments the singing began again, the chorus of men's voices sounding out sweet and clear over the silent harbor. The four girls sat listening to one well-known song after another: "Tipperary," "Bid Me Good-Bye With a Smile," and "Keep the Home Fires Burning." It was too far away for them to distinguish the words, but they all knew the tunes, and by and by they began to sing themselves. But though Gretel was fond of singing, and had a fairly good little voice of her own, she did not join in the choruses, as usual.

"Why don't you sing, Gretel?" Geraldine asked at last. "You know 'Over There,' don't you?"

"Yes, I know it," Gretel answered, softly; "but I don't feel just like singing to-night. I'm thinking about those boys on the ship. They sound so merry and happy, just as if

war were nothing but a big joke. And yet, in a little while, they may all be fighting, and perhaps ——" Gretel paused, abruptly, with an only half-suppressed sob.

"I don't believe they think very much about serious things," said Kitty.

"Some of them do, I am sure," said Gretel, unsteadily, "but when people are brave they can pretend not to mind things, and help others by being cheerful. I think to be brave is one of the grandest things in the world."

"Even greater than being a great musician like your father?" Kitty asked.

"Yes, even greater than that," said Gretel, gravely.

Just then Jerry and Paul, who had been spending the evening at one of the neighbors', returned, and in a few minutes Mrs. Chester called them all indoors.

When they awoke the next morning the big battle-ship was no longer to be seen. She had slipped quietly out to sea during the night.

CHAPTER VII

GRETEL MEETS AN OLD FRIEND

"MOTHER wants to know if any one would like to go into New London with her," said Molly, coming into Gretel's and Geraldine's room, on the following Saturday afternoon. "She's going to the station to meet Aunt Dulcie, and has a little shopping to do first. She thought perhaps you might like to go with her."

"I'm going fishing with the boys," said Geraldine. "I promised Jerry. He says he hasn't seen anything of me since we came here."

"I'd like to go," said Gretel, looking up from her knitting. "I want to get some more wool for this helmet I'm making for your cousin. I'm afraid I haven't enough to finish it."

"All right; I'll tell Mother. I'd like to go myself, but Kitty has a headache, and I've promised to stay at home with her. You and Steve seem to be great friends, Gretel."

"I like him," said Gretel, simply. "He's so kind and polite, and when he asked me to make a helmet for him, I was glad to do it."

Molly laughed.

"It's rather a joke," she said, "considering the way he used to tease me about you."

"Why did he tease you about me?" Gretel inquired, in surprise.

Molly looked a little embarrassed.

"Oh, it was all nonsense, of course," she said. "It was on account of your name, you know. You see, I used to talk a good deal about you, and he got into the way of calling you—you won't be offended if I tell you, will you?"

"Not a bit," promised Gretel, laughing. "What did he call me?"

"Well, I'm afraid it wasn't a very pretty name, but then, you know, he had never seen you, and hadn't any idea what you were like.

He always spoke of you as 'Miss Pumpernickel.'"

Gretel and Geraldine both laughed heartily, and Gretel declared Stephen might call her "Miss Pumpernickel" as often as he liked, because she was sure he didn't mean anything unkind.

"It's different when people say things in a disagreeable way," she added, growing grave again.

"I know what you mean," said Molly, understanding. "I think Ada Godfrey was perfectly disgusting the way she spoke to those girls yesterday afternoon, when we were over at her place playing tennis. It sounded as if she were apologizing for your name being German. Kitty and I both noticed it."

"I noticed it, too," said Geraldine, "and I felt like giving Ada a piece of my mind afterwards. I would have done it, if Gretel hadn't begged me not to."

"Oh, where is the use?" said Gretel, smiling a little sadly. "We can't help it if people like to say disagreeable things, and it only

makes it worse if we seem to notice. How soon is your mother going to start, Molly?"

"In about half an hour. Aunt Dulcie is coming on the Boston train that gets here at half-past five. She's been staying with Aunt Maud in Magnolia. I'll tell Mother you'll be ready to go with her," and Molly hurried away.

"You really are a very broad-minded person, Gretel," remarked Geraldine when Molly had left the room. "Things don't seem to make you angry, as they do other people, and you always make allowances."

"I often feel angry inside," Gretel admitted, honestly, "but I try not to let people see it. After all, every one has a right to express an opinion, and it's only natural Ada should hate the Germans."

Gretel had only been at the Chesters' four days, but she already felt thoroughly at home with the whole family. She had taken a great fancy to kind, cheerful Mrs. Chester, and the thought of the short drive with her was very pleasant. So it was with a very light heart

that she ran down-stairs half an hour later to join her hostess at the front door.

The drive was as pleasant as she had anticipated, but it was a very hot afternoon, and as they neared the town the little sea breeze, which had prevented people on the Point from realizing quite how hot it was, entirely died out.

"This heat is really unbearable," Mrs. Chester declared, as the car turned into the crowded main street. "We will hurry with our shopping, and perhaps have time for a little turn before the train comes. Motoring is about the pleasantest thing one can do on a day like this. You may stop the car right here in the shade, Thomas, and Miss Gretel and I will get out. Now, dear, suppose you do your errand while I attend to a little Saturday marketing, and then we can both come back here. I think you may find your wool at one of those shops on the other side of the street."

New London streets had seldom been more crowded than on that Saturday afternoon. Besides the usual number of Saturday shop-

pers, there were many strangers, who had motored into town, and a goodly sprinkling of sailors from the naval station. The streets were lined with motors, and people pushed and jostled each other on the narrow sidewalks. It was a good-natured crowd, however, and Gretel found it rather entertaining. She was obliged to try several shops before finding what she wanted, and was just coming out of a big dry-goods store, with her parcel, when she almost collided with a man who appeared to be lounging idly against the open doorway. He moved aside, murmuring a word of apology, and at the same moment something vaguely familiar in his face caused Gretel to look at him more attentively. In another second she had uttered a cry of joyful recognition, and was holding out both hands to the stranger.

"Fritz, Fritz Lippheim, is it really you?"

In the excitement of that recognition, Gretel had forgotten the war, Germany, everything in the world except the one joyful fact

that here was her father's dear old friend, the man who had been so kind to her when she was a little girl. At the sound of her voice, however, the stranger had drawn back suddenly, and was now regarding her with an expression of mingled surprise and embarrassment.

"I beg your pardon," he said, stiffly; "I think you are under a mistake. My name—good heavens! I believe it's little Gretel Schiller!"

"Of course it is!" laughed Gretel. "Oh, Fritz, you don't know how glad I am to see you. I've been wanting to hear something about you and dear Mrs. Lippheim for years and years. My sister-in-law and I tried to find you once, but you had moved, and no one could give us your address. Do tell me about everything. How is your mother?"

A shade of sadness crossed the man's troubled face.

"My mother is dead," he answered. "She died nearly three years ago."

"Oh, Fritz, I am so sorry!" The tears

started to Gretel's eyes. "I always hoped I should see her again some time. She was so good to me always, especially after Father died. I wanted to thank you both for all you did for me then, and so did my brother and sister-in-law."

Fritz Lippheim glanced uneasily up and down the crowded street.

"I would never have recognized you if you had not spoken, Gretel," he said. "Why, you are quite grown-up."

"I am fifteen," said Gretel. "I was only ten when you saw me last, but I would have known you anywhere. Can't we go somewhere where it isn't quite so crowded? I want to ask you about so many things. I have just seen the lady I am with go into that market, so I know she won't be through her shopping for a few minutes longer."

For a moment the man hesitated; then he led the way round a corner, into one of the quiet side streets.

"Now that I look at you more closely," he said, "I can see a strong resemblance to the

little Gretel of five years ago. Are you living in New London?"

"No," said Gretel; "I am only visiting here. I live in New York, with my brother and his wife. You remember my half-brother, Percy Douaine, who was in China when Father died. He came home the next year, and took me to live with him. It was all quite like a Cinderella story, for I wasn't very happy with Mrs. Marsh and her daughter, and Percy made everything so wonderful and beautiful for me. Now he is married to one of the dearest women in the world, and I am just as happy as I can be—or would be if it were not for this terrible war."

"Oh, yes, the war; the war has changed many things," said Fritz Lippheim, with a sigh. "I am sometimes glad to think the little Mother did not live to see these sad days. I suppose you are quite an American now."

"Oh, yes," said Gretel; "we are all good Americans, of course. But I am afraid I mustn't stand talking any longer. My friend

may be looking for me. Can't we meet again somewhere?"

Fritz Lippheim shook his head.

"I fear not," he said. "War changes many things, as I said before. My business here is of rather a private nature, and—may I ask a favor of you, little Gretel?"

"Certainly," said Gretel, her face falling. "I will do anything I can for you, Fritz, for the sake of the dear old days."

"It is merely that you will not mention to any of your friends that you have met me. We may meet again in happier times, when I can explain, but at present I cannot say any more."

Gretel's heart gave a great bound of fear, and then sank down, down like lead. She hoped her old friend would not notice how startled she was.

"I won't tell any one," she said in a low, embarrassed voice. "I'm sorry I spoke to you, if you didn't want to be recognized, but I had no idea ——" Gretel paused abruptly, fearing the man would hear the tremor in her voice.

Fritz Lippheim caught her hand impulsively.

"It isn't that I am not pleased to see you, Gretel," he said earnestly. "Indeed, I am glad to find my little friend again, and to know that she has not forgotten me, but there are reasons, important reasons, which I cannot explain at present. Will you try to believe that, Gretel, and not think too unkindly of poor old Fritz?"

His voice was so kind, and his smile reminded her so strongly of the old friend of her childhood that Gretel's face brightened.

"All right, Fritz," she said in a very different tone. "Now, I must hurry, or Mrs. Chester will be waiting for me."

"Good-bye, little girl, and if we meet again here, or anywhere, you will remember that we do not know each other?"

Gretel nodded; she could not trust herself to speak, and in another moment she was hurrying back to the main street in quest of Mrs. Chester.

Mrs. Chester had finished her shopping, and

was already in the car, chatting with Jimmy Fairfax, who stood on the curb.

"Oh, I'm afraid I have kept you waiting!" apologized Gretel, rather breathlessly. "I just went round the corner for a minute, and didn't see you come out of the market."

"There is no hurry," said Mrs. Chester, good-naturedly; "I have only just finished my errands. Mr. Fairfax is telling me about the dance they are going to have at The Griswold on the Fourth. All the sailors from the station are to be there, and all the proceeds are to go for the French Ambulance Corps. I must see about getting tickets at once."

Mr. Fairfax and Gretel shook hands, but though pleasant enough in his manner, Gretel could not help noticing that the young man was regarding her in a rather peculiar manner. She was very silent during the short drive that followed. Try as she might to fix her attention on what Mrs. Chester was saying, her thoughts would insist on wandering back to Fritz Lippheim and his strange request. There had never been anything strange or

GRETEL COULD NOT HELP NOTICING THAT THE YOUNG MAN WAS REGARDING HER IN A RATHER PECULIAR MANNER.—*Page 144.*

mysterious about Fritz in the old days, when he came to play his violin at her father's studio. He had been just a kind, simple young man, who loved children, and was devotedly attached to his old mother. She had stayed with the Lippheims for a short time after her father's death, and would never forget their goodness to her. But now—ah, it was quite true, war had indeed changed many things. What could Fritz be doing here in New London that was of such a private nature that he must not be recognized? Fritz was a German, born in Berlin. Oh, what did it all mean? Gretel felt suddenly cold and sick with apprehension.

"I think that is one reason why we sisters have been so very close to each other all our lives," Mrs. Chester was saying in her cheerful, placid voice, and Gretel came back to her present surroundings with the realization that she had not the slightest idea what her companion was talking about.

"Yes, of course, it must be very lovely to have sisters," she faltered, as Mrs. Chester

paused, evidently expecting a comment of some kind. "Molly has told us about some of the funny times you used to have when you were little girls. You knew Mr. Chester then, too, didn't you?"

"Yes; he was a sort of connection of ours, and used to come and stay at the old house on Washington Square. His grandmother had married our grandfather, and we lived with her for some years after our mother died. I shall never forget the day my sister Dulcie lured Paul and me off to try to rescue a stolen child." And Mrs. Chester was off again, on another story, during which I fear Gretel's thoughts wandered more than once.

They reached the station just as the train was coming in, and in the bustle and interest of meeting her sister Mrs. Chester quite forgot Gretel's inattentiveness, which, indeed, she had scarcely noticed.

Mrs. Chester's "Literary Sister" was a tall lady, with a strong, clever face, and a crisp, rather abrupt manner, but her eyes and voice

were kind, and her greeting to Gretel was a very hearty one.

"I am always so glad to meet any of Molly's friends," she said, as she took her seat in the car, between her sister and Gretel. "You know, Molly and I are great chums, despite the difference in our ages. We keep up a steady correspondence all winter, and I really feel quite intimate with all the girls at Miss Minton's."

"You will find two more of the Minton girls at the house," said Mrs. Chester; "Kitty Sharp and Geraldine Barlow. Geraldine's twin brother is with us, too."

"I am glad; I like young people. How's Steve?"

"Very well, and coming to dinner to-night. He would have been at the station to meet you, but couldn't get off duty. I hope you had a comfortable journey."

"It was broiling in the train, but I didn't particularly mind. I was absorbed in a book all the way, and there was an electric fan directly over my seat, which gave some relief.

What luxuries all these modern inventions are!"

"They certainly are," Mrs. Chester agreed. "I sometimes wonder how people lived without the telephone."

"Do you remember the first time we ever heard of a telephone?" Mrs. Cranston said, smiling. "It was Paul who informed us that there was a telephone at his home in Boston, and that his mother could talk to his father at his office. We decided that it was a great pity such a nice little boy as Paul should be so untruthful. I think Daisy prayed for him." Mrs. Cranston laughed over the old childish reminiscence, but her face softened at the thought of the little sister who had died so many years ago.

"I remember it well," said Mrs. Chester, "and I also remember that wonderful story you invented about the princess who possessed a magic music-box that could sing as well as play. Paul has given me a new victrola, by the way; the best we have ever had."

The sisters chatted on pleasantly, but Gretel

scarcely heard what they said. Her thoughts were back in her father's studio, and she was recalling scene after scene, in which Fritz Lippheim had played his part. As soon as she reached home she slipped away to her own room and, sitting down in a rocking-chair by the open window, sat with folded hands, staring straight before her, for the next half hour. She was aroused at last by the entrance of Geraldine.

"Did you have a good time?" Gretel asked, trying to speak quite naturally, as if nothing unusual had happened.

"Yes, fine," Geraldine answered, tossing her hat on the bed and subsiding wearily into a chair. "It was pretty hot, but I didn't mind. Jerry caught a three-pounder; pretty good, wasn't it? I didn't get a bite myself, but I enjoyed sitting in the boat and watching the others. I suppose you've seen the authoress?"

"Oh, yes, and she is very pleasant. She and Mrs. Chester reminisced all the way home."

"Did you succeed in getting your wool?"

Gretel gave a little start.

"Yes, I got it," she said, "but—but I don't seem to remember bringing it home. It isn't here anywhere, is it?" And she glanced anxiously around the room.

"I don't see it anywhere," said Geraldine, rising. "Perhaps you put it away when you came in."

Gretel opened several bureau drawers, but there was no package to be found.

"I must have dropped it, or left it in the car," she said. "Oh, I am sorry, for it was hard work getting what I wanted, and I had to try several shops."

Geraldine looked puzzled.

"It isn't a bit like you to forget things," she said. "If it were I, now; but you, of all people! And you were so anxious to get that wool, too. What ever were you thinking about?"

Before Gretel could answer, there was a knock at the door and a maid appeared with a small parcel in her hand.

"This was left in the car," she explained. "Thomas found it, and Mrs. Chester thinks it belongs to Miss Gretel."

"Well, you didn't lose it; that's one comfort," said Geraldine, glancing at her friend's flushed, troubled face, when the maid had left the room. "You needn't look so solemn about it. It isn't a crime to forget a parcel. I hope nothing disagreeable happened while you were out. You didn't meet Ada, did you?"

"Why, no," said Gretel; "what made you think I had?"

"Oh, I don't know. I just thought you might have met her, and she might have been in one of her patriotic moods. She seems to think that because she can't go and shoot the Germans, it's her duty to say all the awful things about them that she can think of. I don't suppose any American approves of the dreadful things Germany has done, but we don't think it necessary to be rude to every one who happens to have a German name. She's got a boy cousin staying with her now, and Jerry and Paul say he's an awful kid;

spoiled to death by his mother, and thinks he's of more importance than anybody else, because his father was lost on the *Lusitania.*"

"Poor boy," said Gretel, with a sigh; "I don't blame him for hating the Germans. Oh, Geraldine, I think I realize more and more every day how horribly cruel war is!" And, to Geraldine's utter astonishment, Gretel suddenly burst into tears.

Geraldine's arms were round her friend's neck in a moment.

"You poor darling!" she cried, kissing her; "I knew somebody had been hurting your feelings; I just knew it! As if it were your fault that your father happened to be a German! I'd just like to kill the people who say unkind things to you."

"Oh, hush, hush, Geraldine," soothed Gretel, smiling through her tears. "You mustn't get so excited about nothing. No one has said anything unkind. That isn't why I'm crying. It's because—oh, I can't talk about it, but war is so terrible! It makes even good people do things they would be ashamed of at any other

time. I'm frightened, Geraldine; I suppose it's foolish, but I can't help being frightened." Gretel laid her head on her friend's shoulder with a sob.

Geraldine soothed and comforted her as best she could, and in a few minutes Gretel dried her eyes and began to dress for dinner. But though she asked no more questions, Geraldine was not satisfied.

"Something did happen this afternoon," she told herself with conviction. "Gretel would never have cried like that for nothing. Perhaps she'll tell me about it by and by, but I don't believe I'd better say any more just now."

But Gretel did not "tell her about it by and by." She was very quiet all the evening, and her friend's efforts to discover the cause of the trouble met with so little response that Geraldine began to feel a little hurt. It was the first time in all the years of their friendship that Gretel had ever had a secret in which Geraldine had not shared.

CHAPTER VIII

ADA EXPRESSES AN OPINION

"COME down here, Jerry; I want to talk to you."

Jerry Barlow swung himself down from the piazza railing, from whence he had been watching the departure of a sailboat filled with Sunday pleasure-seekers, and joined his sister on the lawn.

"What's up?" he demanded curiously, for Geraldine's face was serious.

Geraldine did not answer at once, but led the way across the lawn to a little rustic summer-house, covered with blooming honeysuckle.

"I didn't want to talk where any one could hear," she explained. "Sit down, and I'll tell you. I'm worried about Gretel."

"Worried about Gretel," repeated Jerry, incredulously. "Why, there isn't anything the matter with her, is there? She looks all right to me."

"Oh, I don't mean that she's ill, or anything like that," said Geraldine. "I know she's in some trouble, and she won't tell me what it is. It began yesterday afternoon, when she went to New London with Mrs. Chester."

"Why don't you ask her what the matter is?" Jerry inquired, practically. "I thought you two always told each other everything."

Geraldine reddened.

"We always have," she said; "at least, I always tell her everything, and I thought she told me, but she won't tell me about this. I'm afraid she's very unhappy."

"What makes you think so?" asked Jerry, his own face sobering, for he was almost as devoted to Gretel as his sister.

"Well," said Geraldine, slowly, "it's all rather queer, and I don't understand it. She was all right till yesterday afternoon. She went shopping with Mrs. Chester, and she has been different ever since. She cried dreadfully, and she scarcely ate any dinner, and once in the night I woke up and heard her tossing and moaning in her sleep. I saw her wiping her

eyes in church this morning, and now she's gone up to her room to write letters. She's trying awfully hard to be cheerful, and act as if nothing had happened, but she can't deceive me."

Jerry's eyes flashed indignantly.

"I guess I know what the trouble is," he said. "Somebody's been making disagreeable remarks about her being German. It's a beastly shame, that's what it is."

"I thought of that," said Geraldine, "but who could it have been? Not Mrs. Chester or that nice Mrs. Cranston, I am sure. I asked her if she had happened to meet Ada Godfrey, and she said no. I can't think of any one else who would do such a mean thing."

"Well, I wish I could catch whoever it was," declared Jerry. "I'd say what I thought pretty quick. That kid over at the Godfreys' makes me sick, the way he goes on about the Germans. Suppose his father did get drowned on the *Lusitania*. It was an awful thing, of course, but he needn't put on such grand airs, and talk about never touching the

hand of a German. Wouldn't eat with one, he said, any more than he'd eat with a negro. Paul and I told him to shut up, and then he got mad, and wouldn't speak to us. He's only thirteen, but you should see him swagger. I'd like to give that kid a ducking, and—I say, here he comes, and the Godfrey girl along with him."

It was true; Ada Godfrey and her cousin Archie Davenport were coming up the path from the gate. Geraldine uttered a smothered exclamation of dismay.

"I believe Molly did ask them over," she said; "I had forgotten all about it. I hope they won't say anything to upset Gretel more than she is upset already. You must be polite to that boy, Jerry, even if he is a cad. Remember we are the Chesters' guests, and we can't be rude to people who come to their house." With which final warning to her brother, Geraldine went forward to welcome the visitors.

Archie Davenport was a pale, undersized boy, with a shrill, childish voice, and the man-

ners of a man of the world. He was an only child, and since his father's tragic death, two years before, had been completely spoiled by his doting mother. In response to Ada's introduction, he greeted Geraldine with a grown-up manner, which almost made her laugh in his face, and, before they reached the house, had inquired, with the air of a bored clubman:

"Any sport going on this afternoon?"

"I don't know just what you call sport," said Geraldine, her eyes beginning to twinkle. "I dare say you and the boys will find some way of amusing yourselves. You might like to see Frank's rabbits."

Jerry chuckled appreciatively, but before Archie could express his contempt of such juvenile pastime, Molly and Kitty—who had seen their approach—came out to meet them.

"It was good of you to walk over here in this heat," said Molly, as she led the way to the coolest corner of the piazza. "We are expecting some more visitors later, but we can

have a nice little chat by ourselves before they come."

"Who are coming?" Ada inquired with interest.

"My cousin Stephen Cranston and that nice Virginia friend of his, Mr. Fairfax. Steve comes over from the station as often as he can get leave, now his mother is here, and we all like Jimmy Fairfax very much."

Ada's face brightened perceptibly. She was nearly sixteen, and not at all averse to the society of young men.

"May I go up to your room for a minute to smooth my hair?" she asked. "All the crimp has come out in the heat, and I should like to look respectable when your friends come."

"Oh, I don't believe they care how anybody looks," said innocent Molly. "They are only too thankful to get away for a little rest. Steve says they work like dogs at the submarine base. But, of course, you can come up to my room if you want to." And she led the way indoors.

"Where's Gretel?" Ada inquired, on the way up-stairs.

"In her room, writing letters," said Molly. "She'll be down by and by."

Ada lowered her voice. "Do you know, Molly, I think it's a great pity Gretel hasn't given up that horrid German name. She could call herself Douaine just as well as not, and it would be so much less embarrassing."

"Embarrassing," repeated Molly, "I don't see anything embarrassing about it. What do you mean?"

"Why, in introducing her to people, of course. Nobody wants to meet a person named Schiller in these days, and some people even think it unusually kind of your father and mother to have Gretel here just now. Mrs. Appleton was speaking to Mother about it the other day, after the Red Cross meeting."

"I never heard of anything quite so silly in my life," exclaimed Molly, indignantly. "Gretel is just as much an American as any of us. Lots of Americans have German names."

"Oh, I'm not saying anything against her," protested Ada. "I only said it was a pity she wasn't willing to be called Douaine instead of Schiller. Is this your room? How pretty it is." And Ada, possibly judging from Molly's expression that she had said enough on the subject of German names, hastened to lead the conversation into smoother channels.

Gretel, in her own room, was finishing a long letter to Barbara. It was a pleasant, cheerful letter, telling of the little every-day happenings, and containing no word that would lead Mrs. Douaine to suppose her sister-in-law had a care in the world. And yet, as Gretel finished the last page, and addressed her envelope, her heart was far from being as light as Barbara imagined.

"If I could only tell her and Percy about it," she said with a sigh, "it would be so much easier. Percy is so wise and broad-minded, he would be sure to know what to do. But Fritz asked me not to mention him to any one, and he was Father's best friend. Oh, I can't believe that Fritz is doing anything wrong,

and yet why should he object to people knowing who he is?"

It was a very perplexing question, and Gretel leaned her chin in her hands, and thought long and earnestly. She heard the voices of visitors on the piazza, but felt in no hurry to go down-stairs and join her friends. It was a relief to be alone for a little while. Oh, why had she gone shopping with Mrs. Chester? Why had she ever met Fritz Lippheim? She resolved that, if possible, she would keep away from the town during the remainder of her visit.

At last the clock on the stairs struck five, and Gretel roused herself with an effort.

"I must go down," she told herself reluctantly. "They will think me so queer and unsociable if I stay up here any longer. Ada's voice sounds as if she were holding forth about something."

Ada certainly was "holding forth," and even before she reached the piazza, Gretel could hear her declaring in a loud, decided voice:

"I think it's the duty of every one of us to do it. A person who didn't would be acting disloyally to the United States."

"Here comes Miss Gretel," said Stephen Cranston, rising, and going forward to meet the newcomer, in his kind, courteous way. "You are just in time to hear Miss Godfrey deliver a lecture on loyalty. She is very eloquent on the subject."

Gretel smiled faintly as she dropped into the chair Stephen pushed forward for her, and, turning to Ada, asked what the lecture was about.

"I'm not delivering a lecture at all," said Ada, rather crossly. "I was only saying something that every one knows. We were talking about spies, and Kitty said she wondered what a person would do who found out some one she knew was a suspicious character. I said of course a loyal American would inform at once. It's the only thing to do in war time."

"But I didn't mean an ordinary person," objected Kitty. "I meant a friend, some one

you really cared about. Just think of having to inform against a cousin, or ——"

"I would inform against my own brother if I thought he were disloyal to my country," interrupted Ada, heroically. "Don't you think I am right, Mr. Fairfax?"

"I do," agreed the young ensign heartily. "Any one acting against the United States Government is a traitor, and we all know what should be done with traitors."

"But suppose you were not sure," objected Kitty. "Suppose you only suspected some one, and had no real proof, what would you do then?"

"This is no time to wait for proof," Jimmy Fairfax asserted. "Let the United States Secret Service look up the proofs. Our duty would be to give the information, and put the right authorities on the scent. Did you read about those ammunition works that were blown up the other day in New Jersey? More than a hundred people were killed. That was undoubtedly the work of the Germans. I tell you we can't be too careful."

"Well, we are none of us likely to be called upon to inform against any of our friends," said Stephen, good-naturedly. "I don't believe we have any German spies among our acquaintances, do you, Miss Gretel?"

"I hope not, I am sure," said Gretel, trying to speak quite naturally, but conscious of a sound of embarrassment in her voice.

Stephen looked at her more attentively.

"Have you a headache?" he asked, kindly.

"No," said Gretel. "What made you think I had?"

"I thought you were looking a little seedy. This heat is enough to give any one a headache. My mother has had a bad one all day. Ah, here comes some iced tea; that will refresh us all. Aunt Molly knows what people like on a hot afternoon."

"I wonder where the boys are," remarked Molly, getting out of the hammock and preparing to take command of the tea-tray. "Jerry adores this chocolate cake."

"Here comes one boy, at any rate," said

Stephen. "He doesn't look very cheerful. Perhaps the heat has used him up."

"It's Ada's cousin," said Molly. "Come up here, Archie, and have some tea. Where are the others?"

"Down at the barn, amusing themselves with rabbits," answered Archie, in a tone of extreme disgust. "I stayed as long as I could stand it. I've come to see if Ada isn't ready to go home."

"You don't care about pets, then," said Molly, with difficulty preserving her gravity.

"Not much. I think I'm rather too old to waste my time over rabbits. There's a kid down there, too, and the boys are making such a silly fuss over her. I can't stand babies."

"That's my little sister Daisy," said Molly. "We think she's quite adorable. I'm sorry you don't like her."

"I prefer older people," replied Archie, with his most grown-up air, and then, catching sight of the tea-tray, he added in quite a different tone:

"I say that cake looks good. Can a fellow have some?"

"To be sure," laughed Molly. "Come up and meet my friends. This is my cousin Mr. Cranston, and this other young man is Mr. Fairfax. These girls are Geraldine Barlow, Kitty Sharp, and Gretel Schiller. You've met Geraldine and Kitty already, but I don't think you've seen Gretel before."

Archie had reached the top of the piazza steps by this time, but at the mention of Gretel's name, he suddenly drew back and thrust both hands into his pockets.

"That's the German girl," he announced in his shrill, aggressive voice. "I don't speak to Germans. Ada told me you had one here, and I said I wouldn't speak to her."

"You little cad!" exclaimed Stephen, angrily; "you deserve a good thrashing, and I'd like to give it to you!"

He half rose from his chair as he spoke, but Gretel put out a detaining hand.

"Please don't make a fuss," she said in a low voice. "He's only a little boy, and—and

I'm afraid a good many people feel that way about Germans."

"Archie, you are a very naughty boy," expostulated Ada. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. If you can't be a gentleman, you had better go back to the rabbits."

"Well, I like that!" cried Archie, indignantly. "You're a nice one to scold me, after saying ——"

"Archie Davenport, stop this very minute. If you say another word I'll tell Aunt Agnes, and you will be severely punished." Ada's cheeks were crimson, and she was looking decidedly uncomfortable.

"Don't mind him, please, Ada," pleaded Gretel. "It really isn't worth while to let a boy like that spoil Molly's tea-party. Let's give him some cake, and perhaps it will keep him quiet."

Gretel spoke cheerfully, but her voice was not quite steady, and there was a hurt look in her eyes that it pained her friends to see.

"He doesn't deserve any cake," declared Ada, rising. "I'm going to take him home.

GRETEL PUT OUT A DETAINING HAND.—*Page 167.*

It's time I went, anyway; I promised Mother to be back by half-past five. Good-bye, everybody. Oh, Mr. Cranston, don't you and Mr. Fairfax want to come over to play tennis at our place some afternoon? The courts are pretty good. You can bring any friends you like." And, having cast a rather coquettish glance in the direction of the two young ensigns, Ada hurried down the steps, followed by the reluctant Archie.

"I'll walk home with you if you don't mind," said Jimmy Fairfax. And as Ada certainly did not mind, the two walked down the path together very amicably indeed.

For the next few minutes everybody talked fast and rather nervously. Molly plied Gretel with tea and chocolate cake, and Geraldine changed her seat so as to sit next to her friend, and give Gretel's hand a surreptitious squeeze. Kitty began to sing, "When the Boys Come Home," and Stephen plunged into a funny story, which made them all laugh. No further allusion was made to Ada or her cousin, and it was evident that every one was anxious to

be especially kind to Gretel. Gretel understood, and her heart glowed with gratitude, but Archie Davenport's foolish behavior had left a sting, nevertheless, and then there was that talk about informing against suspects, to add still more to her trouble and perplexity. Jimmy Fairfax came back to supper, and in the evening they all went out in the launch, with Mrs. Cranston to chaperon the party.

"Why so pensive, Miss Gretel?" Stephen asked, taking the vacant seat beside Gretel, as the little motor-boat carried them swiftly up the river towards Norwich.

Gretel roused herself with a start.

"I didn't know I was pensive," she said, smiling. "I was thinking how lovely and peaceful it was out here on the water."

"You looked as if your thoughts were about a thousand miles away from the rest of us," said the young man. "I want to say something but I'm half afraid you may not like it."

"Try and see," said Gretel. "I don't believe it is anything I shall object to."

"It's about the nonsense that little beast talked this afternoon. I'm afraid it hurt your feelings and it's rather silly to mind those things, you know."

"I know it is," said Gretel. "I try not to be silly and I really don't mind half as much as I did at first. I know a great many people feel very bitterly against the Germans, and I don't suppose they can help it. I am an American, of course, but my father was a German and I loved him very dearly. It does hurt sometimes to hear people talk about his country as they do."

"Of course it hurts," said Stephen. "I can just imagine how I should feel about people who talked against the United States. The Germans have done some outrageous things and I hope they are going to be thoroughly licked, but it isn't necessary to throw mud at people just because they happen to have had German ancestors. I'm awfully glad you look at the thing so sensibly."

"Mr. Cranston," said Gretel abruptly, "do you agree with Ada and Mr. Fairfax in what

they said this afternoon about—about informing against people?"

Stephen hesitated for a moment and his merry, boyish face grew grave.

"That is a hard question to answer," he said. "To inform against a friend is a pretty rotten thing to do, and yet these are very serious times. I think it would depend a good deal upon the circumstances in the case. One would have to be pretty sure one wasn't mistaken."

Gretel's face brightened, but before she could speak again, Mrs. Cranston called to her son from the other end of the boat.

"Sing something, Steve; the girls want to hear you."

There was no more war talk that evening, but Stephen could not help noticing that Gretel seemed more cheerful than she had been all the afternoon, and when they reached the landing he detained Molly for a moment on the pier to say in a low tone:

"I hope you are not going to let your friend Miss Godfrey bring that brat of a cousin of

hers over here again. He upset Gretel Schiller a lot, and she's a nice girl, too. I say, do you happen to know if she has many German friends?"

"I know she hasn't," said Molly, confidently. "She told us that with the exception of our Fräulein at school, she hadn't spoken to a single German since she was a little girl. Why do you want to know?"

"Oh, I was only wondering," returned her cousin carelessly. "It would be pretty hard for her if she had German friends in these days, that's all. That Godfrey girl hasn't much tact."

"Gretel is very sensitive," said Molly, "but she hasn't any German friends, so there isn't anything to worry about." And Molly tripped away to join the rest of the party.

Stephen Cranston was not Gretel's only champion, as she discovered a little later that evening. The visitors had gone and the family were on their way up-stairs to bed, when Jerry waylaid her in the front hall.

"Wait a minute, Gretel," he said in a low

voice. "I just want to tell you that I'm going to punch that kid's head to-morrow."

"What kid's head?" demanded Gretel, pausing with her foot on the lowest stair.

"The little rat who insulted you this afternoon. Geraldine has been telling me about it. I only wish I'd been there to give him what he deserved."

"See here, Jerry," said Gretel, sternly, "you must promise me faithfully to do nothing of the kind. You will make me very uncomfortable and unhappy if you do."

Jerry looked very much surprised, and a little disgusted as well.

"You don't like being insulted, do you?" he inquired incredulously.

"No, of course not. It was all rather horrid, and I was awfully upset for a few minutes, but that boy is just silly and spoiled, and besides, he's smaller than you. He has a reason for hating the Germans; his father was lost on the *Lusitania*. He doesn't know I am an American; he only knows my father was a German. Now, Jerry, will you promise me to

let him alone, and not say another word about it?"

Gretel spoke pleadingly, and Jerry was somewhat mollified. He moved uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Well, if you put it in that way," he said, reluctantly, "I suppose I've got to promise, but it really would be a great satisfaction to punch that kid's head."

Gretel could not help laughing.

"Thank you, Jerry dear," she said. "I know you are my friend, and want to help me when you can, but if you were to make any more trouble about this silly business, I should feel very badly indeed. I wouldn't for the world have anything happen to make things uncomfortable for the Chesters. I'm as good an American as any of you, you know that, but I can't help having a German name, and if people say disagreeable things, I've just got to make the best of it, and try not to mind."

"A very sensible conclusion," said a pleasant voice close behind them, and Mrs. Cranston slipped an arm round Gretel's waist. "I

couldn't help overhearing what you were saying, dear," she added, as they went up-stairs together. "Steve has told me about that little episode this afternoon, and I think you acted with a good deal of dignity, and showed real common sense."

Gretel found Molly, Kitty, and Geraldine all eagerly discussing the events of the afternoon.

"I really can't stand Ada Godfrey," Geraldine was declaring, as Gretel entered the room. "She must have said something horrid; that boy hinted as much."

"Oh, please don't let's talk any more about that," urged Gretel, cheerfully. "Let's forget all about it, and talk of something else. Molly, I see why you are so fond of your aunt. She is perfectly lovely and the most understanding person I've met in a long time."

CHAPTER IX

THE DANCE ON THE FOURTH

It was the glorious Fourth. The boys had been celebrating since early morning, when they had aroused the household by setting off a pack of giant crackers on the front lawn. There had been a picnic lunch in the woods, an exciting tennis tournament at the Country Club in the afternoon, and now they were dressing for the principal event of the day: the big subscription dance at the summer hotel, for which all the neighborhood had bought tickets.

"It's the first really grown-up party I've ever been to," remarked Geraldine, as she stood before the bureau, brushing out her long hair. "I suppose I shall be the youngest girl there, and the boys won't even look at me. Don't you think, Gretel, I might try putting up my hair? I could take it right down again if it looked queer."

"I wouldn't if I were you," advised Gretel. "You are only fourteen, you know, and I don't believe your mother would like it. You'll have plenty of partners, I'm sure, even if your hair isn't up. Stephen has promised to look after you, and as soon as people find out what a good dancer you are, they'll all want to dance with you."

Geraldine sighed, but submitted to her friend's superior judgment. As a rule, she was quite indifferent to her personal appearance, but this was a very particular occasion, and besides, Geraldine had been growing up rather fast during the past few weeks.

"I wish Jerry were going," she said, regretfully. "He'd dance with me if nobody else did, but he hates parties; and Mrs. Chester thinks he's too young to have a good time. Your dress is lovely, Gretel, and I never saw you look prettier."

Gretel flushed with pleasure. It is pleasant to be admired, even by a girl a year younger than one's self. Those weeks of sea air had certainly done Gretel good. There was a color

in her cheeks, and a light in her eyes, that had not been there during her first few days at the Chesters'. Since that Sunday afternoon, now more than a week ago, nothing had occurred to trouble or annoy her. She had not seen Fritz Lippheim again, and Ada Godfrey, as if to atone for her cousin's rudeness, had been unusually kind and tactful. The Chester family all liked her, and she had found a real friend in Mrs. Cranston. She had good news from her own family in Washington, and altogether her days had been very happy ones.

"I'm so glad you like my dress," she said. "Barbara bought it for me that last day in New York, and there wasn't any time for alterations. If my hair were as long and thick as yours, I'm sure I shouldn't mind having people see it. Let me help you on with your dress. I think we ought to hurry a little; it's after eight."

At that moment Molly, already dressed for the evening, appeared in the doorway.

"How nice you both look!" she exclaimed admiringly. "If you knew how becoming

your long hair was, Geraldine, you would never want to put it up. Oh, Gretel dear, I'm so sorry you're going away to-morrow."

"You're not any sorrier than I am myself," said Gretel. "I've had a perfectly lovely visit, and would give anything to stay till Monday, and go home with the Barlows. But it couldn't be arranged. Percy doesn't know when he may be in New York again after to-morrow, and he and Barbara don't want to let me travel alone."

"I know," said Molly, "but that doesn't make it any easier to let you go. You'll have a long time to wait in New York, if your brother doesn't leave till the night train. Is your house open?"

"Oh, yes, there's a caretaker in charge, and Percy often spends the night there when he is in New York. I shall manage very comfortably, and Percy will take me out to dinner."

"You might go to see Mother," Geraldine suggested. "She'd love to see you and you could tell her all about us. But be sure not to

mention that the rowboat upset the other day, and Jerry and I had to swim ashore. She'd be sure to think we had both been drowned, and you were trying to break it to her gently."

"We have had some pretty jolly times together, haven't we?" remarked Molly.

"You ought to have heard some of the nice things Mother and Aunt Dulcie were saying about you two girls this afternoon. Here comes Kitty; doesn't she look grand? I say, Kit, that dress is the most becoming thing you ever wore. Let's go down and show ourselves to Mother and Aunt Dulcie before we put on our wraps."

Mr. and Mrs. Chester and Mrs. Cranston were awaiting the young people on the piazza, and ten minutes later they were all in the motor-boat, crossing to the opposite shore where stood the big hotel—a landmark for miles around.

"What a lovely night it is," remarked Mrs. Cranston, as the boat moved away from the pier. "I feel just like going to a party. I haven't been to one in ages."

"I don't believe you will ever grow old, Dulcie," her brother-in-law said, smiling. "Molly and I have reached the age when dances rather bore us, except for the pleasure of watching our young people have a good time."

"I sometimes feel as if I were younger now than when I was twelve," said Mrs. Cranston. "I used to think then that I had the cares of the world on my shoulders, with three younger sisters to look after. We didn't have many parties in those days, did we, Molly? Do you remember our birthdays, and the queer presents we gave each other?"

"Yes, indeed," her sister answered, "and how wonderful the first Christmas seemed after Papa married again, and we went to live with him and Mama."

"Oh, do tell us about it," urged Geraldine. "I love hearing about your experiences when you were little girls."

Mrs. Cranston laughed, and began a story, which lasted till they reached the landing. She was a great favorite with young people,

and her stories, whether written or told, were always fascinating.

"How gay The Griswold looks with all the lights," said Geraldine, as they walked up the path to the hotel. "Just look at that line of automobiles. Everybody must be here."

"Listen to the music!" cried Kitty. "Doesn't it sound gay? I want to begin dancing right off. Do you think it's wicked to want to dance in war time, Mrs. Cranston?"

"Not in the least," Mrs. Cranston assured her, smilingly. "Young people should enjoy themselves while they can. Ah, here comes Steve. I was sure he would be looking for us."

Stephen was looking for them, and so were Jimmy Fairfax and several other young sailors, whose acquaintance the girls had made since coming to New London, and in a very few minutes they had all made their way to the ballroom, and even Geraldine had been provided with a partner.

Gretel was fond of dancing, and moreover, she danced exceedingly well. Before the even-

ing was half over, she had decided that she was having the "time of her life."

"I have hardly seen anything of you," Stephen complained, coming up to her, where she stood fanning herself by his mother's side. "I've looked for you several times, but you were always dancing. Have you a partner for the next?"

Gretel admitted that she had not.

"Then dance it with me, and let me take you in to supper afterwards. I say, Mother, just look at Geraldine. She's danced every dance. The fellows are all crazy about her; she's so jolly and unaffected."

"I'm so glad Geraldine is having a good time," said Gretel, as she and Stephen moved away to the music of a lively one-step. "She was afraid no one would notice her because her hair wasn't up. It was awfully good of you to introduce so many boys to her."

Stephen laughed.

"Geraldine's all right," he said. "I'm sure the fellows like her much better than that affected Ross girl, staying at the Godfreys'.

By the way, your friend Ada is more patriotic than ever to-night. I've heard her lecturing three separate partners on their duty to their country."

"Poor Ada," said Gretel, laughing, "she really is tremendously in earnest. Molly says Ada's greatest fault is an absence of the sense of humor."

At that very moment Ada, at the other end of the ballroom, was remarking to her partner, Jimmy Fairfax:

"Gretel Schiller seems to be having a good time. I believe she has danced every dance."

"Well, why shouldn't she?" Jimmy inquired innocently.

Ada, who had herself sat out several dances for lack of partners, pursed her lips solemnly.

"Oh, no reason at all," she said, "as long as she can enjoy it. I can't see how people can care about such frivolous things in these serious times. I wouldn't have come to-night if it hadn't been for those girls I have staying with me. Mother didn't think it would be right to deprive them of the pleasure."

"Well, I suppose we may as well enjoy ourselves while we can," young Fairfax said, apologetically. "There won't be much enjoyment for us when we get overseas. Miss Gretel seems to be a great favorite."

"Oh, Gretel's all right," Ada admitted. "Everybody likes her. I was only wondering how she can take pleasure in anything when she remembers that her father was a German. If I had only one drop of German blood in my veins I should bow my head in shame."

"It is pretty rough on Miss Gretel," said Jimmy, "especially if she has German relatives. The Government is getting more severe on German-Americans every day."

"Oh, Gretel hasn't any German relatives; at least none in this country," Ada explained. "You see, her mother was an American, and she lives with her half-brother, Mr. Douaine. He's doing Government work in Washington, and Gretel is going there when she leaves here. I have heard her say she doesn't even know any Germans except our teacher at school."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the young man in a

tone of so much surprise that Ada inquired curiously:

"Why do you say 'Indeed' in that incredulous way? You don't know anything about Gretel's friends, do you?"

"Nothing whatever, except——"

"Except what?" demanded Ada, sharply.

"Oh, nothing worth mentioning. I happened to see her talking to a man the other day, that's all. I thought he looked like a German, but I may have been mistaken, of course."

Ada's eyes grew round, and her cheeks flushed.

"Where did you see her?" she inquired. "You ought to be willing to tell me all about it now you've begun."

Jimmy Fairfax was beginning to look decidedly uncomfortable.

"It was in New London," he said, "one afternoon about ten days ago. They were standing in front of one of the shops, and seemed to be talking very earnestly together. Miss Gretel didn't see me, but I was just going

to speak to her when they turned down one of the side streets. Afterwards I met Mrs. Chester, and she told me she was waiting for Gretel Schiller, who had left her to do some shopping. When she joined us a few minutes later, I thought she was looking rather flushed and excited."

Ada looked very serious.

"It sounds queer," she said. "Didn't Gretel say anything about having met a friend?"

"Well, no, she didn't," Jimmy admitted, reluctantly, "but then I left them in a moment, and she may have told Mrs. Chester later."

"Why didn't you ask her about it the next time you saw her?"

"I didn't think it was exactly my business. Miss Gretel had a right to speak to a friend in the street, even if he did happen to be a German."

"Everything is our business in war time," said Ada, virtuously. "We ought to investigate everything that seems in the least suspicious."

"But there may not have been anything suspicious about this," Jimmy objected.

"Not if she had mentioned it afterwards, of course, but I think her not saying anything to Mrs. Chester about having met a friend was decidedly queer. I shall ask her to explain the next time we meet."

"Please don't do anything of the sort," urged the young man, reddening. "She would have every right to consider me an impertinent meddler. I am sorry I ever mentioned the matter at all."

Jimmy was looking very much distressed, and Ada—who was not without a goodly share of coquetry in her nature—began to see an opportunity for teasing.

"Perhaps I won't say anything to Gretel," she conceded, "if you are very nice to me all the rest of the evening, but if you dance any more with that silly little Geraldine Barlow, who is really much too young to be here at all, I won't promise what I may do. Of course I know Gretel is really all right, but I am terribly curious about that German."

Having finished their dance, Gretel and Stephen made their way to the crowded supper room. They were very warm, and rather tired, and the prospect of ices and lemonade was very alluring.

"You'd better wait here, and let me see what I can get," said Stephen, pausing in the doorway. "There is such a crowd around the tables, I think I can manage better alone."

Gretel agreed, and having found a chair for her, her partner hurried away and was speedily lost to sight in the crowd. It was rather amusing to watch the hurrying, chattering throng, and Gretel was enjoying the novel experience thoroughly, when her attention was suddenly attracted by the sight of a gentleman in evening clothes, who had just entered the room. In an instant all her pleasure was gone; her heart gave a great bound and began beating very fast, for the man was Fritz Lippheim. He was evidently alone, but appeared quite at home in his new surroundings, and was moving leisurely towards one of the tables.

He passed so close to Gretel that she could have put out her hand and touched him, but if he recognized her, he made not the slightest sign, and Gretel, flushing and trembling, sank back in her seat, wishing with all her heart that she had never come to the dance.

It was just at that moment that another man paused in passing Fritz to say in a friendly tone:

"Good-evening, Martin. Glad to see you here to-night."

"Good-evening," responded Fritz Lippheim, who did not look at all surprised or embarrassed by his new name, and then the two passed on, and Gretel heard no more of their conversation.

"Here I am at last," said Stephen. "I began to think it was hopeless, but I managed to secure some ice-cream and a couple of glasses of lemonade. How warm you look. It is stifling in here. Let's go out on the piazza. A lot of people are eating there."

"Yes, oh, yes, let's go out," said Gretel, rising, and speaking in a tone of such unmistak-

able relief that her companion regarded her rather curiously.

"I was sorry to be so long," he said. "You weren't frightened or uncomfortable, were you?"

"Not frightened exactly," said Gretel, trying to laugh, "but—but it was a little uncomfortable. There was such a crowd, you know, and I was all alone."

Stephen could not help laughing.

"I didn't know you were so timid," he said. "I will be careful how I leave you alone again, even for the purpose of getting ice-cream."

He spoke jestingly, but Gretel's face was very grave.

"I am a coward," she said; "I have been a coward all my life, and I am afraid I shall always be one."

But Stephen refused to take her seriously, and made so merry over the little episode that Gretel found herself laughing, and in a few minutes had regained her usual self-possession. It was much less crowded on the piazza, and having secured a table to themselves, they

If he recognized her, he made not the slightest sign.
Page 191.

were soon enjoying ice-cream and lemonade, while the distant dance music fell softly on their ears, mingling with the sound of the water lapping against the pier.

"We have had a jolly two weeks all together, haven't we?" Stephen remarked, as he set down his empty lemonade glass. "It's a shame you can't stay over till Monday, and go back with the Barlows."

"I wish I could," said Gretel, "but I must meet my brother in New York to-morrow. He goes back to Washington by the night train, and I'm to go with him. I've had a lovely visit, but I'm afraid I've been very lazy. It doesn't seem as if any one ought to be just having a good time now, when there is so much work to be done. My sister-in-law writes that she is busy from morning till night, and I want to help her all I can."

"Well, I suppose you are right," Stephen admitted, "but I hate to have the party break up. I have an idea that I shan't be here very much longer myself."

Gretel gave a little start.

"You mean that your ship is going across?" she asked, with a sudden catch in her voice.

Stephen nodded.

"I haven't said anything to my mother about it yet, but I think we shall have our sailing orders in a week or two. It will be hard on the mater—I'm her only son, you know, and we've always been a lot to each other—but if it were not for her sake, I should be glad to be off. There is plenty of work to be done over there, and it's quite time we Americans got busy."

Gretel was silent. Somehow she could not say what she wanted to say just then, and before she had steadied her voice a waiter was asking if he could bring them anything. He appeared so suddenly that it seemed to Gretel as if he must have been standing in the shadow all the time.

"Will you have anything more?" Stephen asked.

Gretel shook her head.

"I couldn't possibly eat any more," she said,

but as she spoke her eyes were following the waiter, who was gliding quietly away.

"Then let's go back to the ballroom and have another dance. What are you looking at so intently?"

"It's—it's that waiter," faltered Gretel. "I've seen him somewhere before, but I can't remember where."

Stephen laughed.

"Nothing very surprising about that," he said. "You may easily have seen him at some hotel or restaurant. I didn't notice anything remarkable about his appearance."

Gretel admitted that such might have been the case, but she did not look altogether satisfied. Somehow the man's face seemed to haunt her. She had seen it somewhere, and she did not think it was at a hotel or restaurant. Then there was Fritz Lippheim. What was Fritz doing there, and why had that other man addressed him as Martin? She was sure he had recognized her. If he were merely a guest at the dance, why had he avoided speaking to her? It was all very strange and dis-

quieting. In spite of the fact that her visit had been such a pleasant one, Gretel felt suddenly glad that she was leaving New London in the morning. She wanted to be in Washington with Percy and Barbara.

CHAPTER X

THE SUMMONS

NOTWITHSTANDING the unusually late hours of the night before, the Chester household was astir early the next morning. Mr. Chester and Gretel were to take the eight-thirty train for New York, which meant an early breakfast for everybody, for it had been decreed that they should all go to the station to see them off.

"I just can't tell you how I hate to have you go," Molly declared, hovering over Gretel, as she put the last things into her suit-case. "I wish you would come back and make us another visit later in the season. They say Washington is frightfully hot in August."

"I know it is," said Gretel, "but if Percy and Barbara can stand the heat, I guess I can. It's dear of you to want me, though, and I've had a perfectly beautiful time. It doesn't

seem as if I could have been here more than two weeks."

"I do wish you could have waited till Monday, and gone down with Jerry and me," grumbled Geraldine. "It's perfectly dreadful to think I shan't see you again till we come to Washington in September. Jerry and I wouldn't mind the heat a bit if Mrs. Douaine could have us in August instead."

Gretel laughed, and said she would speak to Barbara on the subject, and then they all hurried away to the waiting automobile.

"Good-bye, dear," Mrs. Cranston said, kissing Gretel affectionately. "I shall never forget the pleasure your music has given me. You must be sure to come and see me in New York next winter."

Then Mrs. Chester kissed her, and told her how much they should all miss her, and Paul and Frank shook hands, and little Daisy—who was devoted to her—began to cry, and was only comforted when Gretel promised to come and tell her more fairy tales next winter.

The four girls and Jerry crowded into the

automobile, and the ride to the station was a very merry one. The train was a few minutes late, and it was while they were standing chatting on the platform, awaiting its arrival, that Gretel caught another glimpse of Fritz Lippheim. He came sauntering through the station, smoking a cigar, and carrying a suit-case, and was evidently, like themselves, waiting for a train. At sight of her old friend, Gretel could not resist a little involuntary start, and Geraldine—who was standing close beside her—inquired curiously:

"What's the matter, Gretel? You look as if you were scared about something."

"There isn't anything the matter," answered Gretel. "I was only—oh, there's a whistle; the train must be coming."

The train was coming, and in another moment it had thundered into the station. Gretel had one more glimpse of Fritz Lippheim getting into one of the coaches, as she and Mr. Chester mounted the steps of the parlor car.

"Good-bye, Gretel, good-bye!" cried her friends in chorus, as the train began to move.

"Be sure to write as soon as you get to Washington."

And Gretel returned the good-byes, and promised to write to everybody, and kept her head craned out of the car window till the platform, with the group of familiar faces on it, had disappeared from sight. Then she sank back in her chair, with a little sigh that was half regret and half relief.

"It has been a lovely visit," she said to herself. "I wonder when I shall see them all again."

The train was crowded, but Mr. Chester had secured seats in advance so that he and Gretel were very comfortable. Gretel felt a little uneasy at first, and glanced anxiously about, in quest of her German friend, but she did not see him again, and there was a good deal of amusement in watching her fellow-passengers. Mr. Chester was very kind and talked pleasantly to her for more than an hour, before going away to the smoking-car, after providing his charge with an interesting book. Gretel tried to read, but found it impossible to fix her

attention on the story, and finally gave it up in despair, and took out her knitting instead. Several ladies were also knitting, and as her fingers flew, Gretel's thoughts were very busy. They had nearly reached New York before she had finally come to a decision, which proved a great relief to her.

"I shall tell Percy about Fritz to-night," she told herself, and she suddenly felt happier than she had felt since the evening before. She opened the bag of pop-corn Jerry had thrust into her hand just as the train was starting, and was placidly munching a ball when Mr. Chester returned.

It was noon when they reached the Grand Central. Mr. Chester hailed a taxi and in it they drove to the Douaines'. Gretel had suggested going home by herself, but her companion refused to leave her until he had seen her safely inside her brother's door.

"The house looks rather deserted," Mr. Chester said, as the cab stopped, and the driver ran up the steps to ring the bell.

"There is a caretaker," Gretel explained,

"and some of the rooms up-stairs are open. Percy spends his nights here when he is in New York. He goes out for his meals, as all the servants are in Washington."

"I am afraid you will have a rather dull day by yourself," said Mr. Chester, regretfully. "I wish I could take you somewhere to lunch, but I must hurry downtown."

Gretel thanked him, but assured him she would not be at all dull, and by this time the door was opened by a stout, good-natured looking Irish woman, who greeted Gretel with a broad, welcoming smile. Mr. Chester hurried away in his taxi, quite satisfied that his charge was in safe hands, and Gretel sat down on the hall chair to read a note her brother had left for her.

It was only a hasty line to say that Percy expected to be very busy all day, but had secured reservations on the night train for Washington, and would call for her at about seven and take her out to dinner.

"I have told Mrs. Murphy to give you some lunch," he added. "I am sorry to leave you

alone all the afternoon, but it cannot be helped."

The house felt cool and comfortable, and Gretel wandered from one room to another, rather enjoying the quiet and the unusualness of everything. She decided that she would stay indoors till late in the afternoon, when it would be cooler, and then go to see Mrs. Barlow. At one o'clock Mrs. Murphy called her to luncheon.

The caretaker was an old acquaintance, who often came to the house to do extra work, and Gretel had many questions to ask her about the family of grandchildren, of whom Mrs. Murphy was extremely proud. Gretel was a great favorite with all the servants, and Mrs. Murphy babbled on all the time she was eating her simple luncheon. Her youngest son was at a training camp, and she had a great deal to say about "them dirty Germans," having apparently no idea that Gretel was in any way connected with the enemy race.

"There's no end to their wickedness," she declared, "and the slyness of them, even the

American ones. My Jim says they caught a feller the other day trying to put a bomb under a train full of soldiers, and he'd lived in this country since he was eight years old. What do you think of that?"

"It is very terrible," Gretel admitted, "but there are some loyal German-Americans," she added, timidly.

"Maybe there is, and maybe there ain't. I wouldn't trust one of them, I know that. Have some more raspberries, do, now. They're real good, and I bought the cream on purpose."

Gretel allowed Mrs. Murphy to fill her plate for a second time, but the Irish woman's talk had rather added to her uneasiness, and she was thankful that she had decided to tell Percy about her meeting with Fritz Lippheim.

After luncheon she went into the drawing-room, and, opening the piano, practised dutifully for the next two hours. There had been little time for practising in New London, and she was anxious not to fall behind with her music during the vacation. But the after-

noon was hot and sultry, and by half-past three Gretel began to feel decidedly tired and sleepy.

"I'll lie down for a little while," she decided, "and then I'll go to see Mrs. Barlow. I don't believe late hours agree with me."

Accordingly, she curled herself up comfortably on the library sofa, and in a very few minutes had fallen into a comfortable nap.

How long she had slept Gretel did not know, but she was aroused by the sharp ringing of the telephone bell.

"It's probably Percy," she told herself, as she rubbed her eyes and rose to answer the summons.

It was evident that Mrs. Murphy had not heard the bell, for there was no sound of approaching footsteps, and the house was very still. Gretel took down the receiver, and began the conversation with the customary "Hello!"

"Is Miss Gretel Schiller there?" inquired a man's voice, certainly not her brother's, for it had a decidedly foreign accent.

"I am Gretel Schiller." Gretel did not

know why her heart was beating so fast, or why her voice trembled.

"Ah, that is good. I have a message from my niece, Anna Sieling."

Gretel gave a little gasp of relief. It was only Fräulein, after all, not Fritz.

"Is Fräulein there?" she asked. "Does she want to speak to me?"

"She is here, but she cannot come to the telephone. She is very ill."

"Very ill!" repeated Gretel, in a tone of real distress. "Oh, I am so sorry! Is there anything I can do for her?"

"If you could come to see her this afternoon? She is most anxious to see you. She is to undergo a serious operation, and fears she may never recover."

"I'll come, of course; I'll come right away," cried Gretel. "But—but how did you know I was in town?"

"We did not know; we only hoped. You wrote my niece that you would probably leave New London on the fifth, and we thought you might be remaining over a few hours in New

York. There could be no harm in inquiring. Anna has been asking for you all day."

Gretel's face was very grave as she hung up the telephone, after obtaining Fräulein's address, for, somewhat to her surprise, she learned that the family had moved during the past week. They were now occupying an apartment on the upper East Side, Fräulein's uncle told her, whereas their former home had been on the West Side, not far from Central Park. It seemed a little odd that Fräulein should not have written her of this change of address, but at the moment Gretel had only one thought; poor, dear Fräulein—who had always been so kind to her—was ill, and longing to see her. How thoughtless and unkind she had been to forget her engagement of two weeks ago. Fräulein had never answered her letter of apology, and Gretel had feared her friend's feelings had really been hurt.

It was only just four o'clock, and without a moment's hesitation Gretel ran up-stairs for her hat. There would be plenty of time to see Fräulein and be back again before her brother

arrived. Mrs. Murphy was nowhere to be seen, but judging from the sound of voices in the kitchen, Gretel decided that the caretaker must be entertaining company. Going to the top of the basement stairs, she called to the Irish woman that she was going out for a little while, to which information Mrs. Murphy responded with a cheerful:

"All right, dearie; have a nice time."

Two minutes later Gretel had closed her brother's front door behind her and was walking rapidly down the street.

The address Fräulein's uncle had given was much further uptown, as well as being farther east, and Gretel, anxious not to lose time, decided to take a car, and, having pushed her way on board a crowded open trolley, she was soon being carried rapidly to the upper part of the great city. She felt very anxious about Fräulein, but found some comfort in the recollection that her friend was apt to make a good deal of slight illnesses. Perhaps, after all, things were not quite as bad as Fräulein's uncle had represented.

A ride of fifteen minutes brought her to a part of the city with which she was quite unfamiliar, and, alighting at a corner of a rather shabby street, she turned her face eastward. She was not at all afraid of not finding her way. She had been accustomed to going about the city by herself since she was a little girl, although of late years Percy and Barbara had insisted on having a maid accompany her when going any distance from home. She walked on briskly for several blocks, the neighborhood growing shabbier and more squalid as she proceeded. There was no doubt that this was a poorer part of the city than where Fräulein's family had lived before. She was afraid her uncle must have met with business reverses lately. Poor Fräulein, how she must hate this neighborhood; she was so fond of luxury and comfort.

The sidewalks were swarming with shabbily dressed children, who screamed and shouted, and at times impeded her progress.

She paused at last before a dingy apartment house, and going up the steps began looking

for the name she wanted. Yes, there it was: "R. Becker; third floor back." Gretel rang Mr. Becker's bell, and waited. In a moment the latch clicked, and Gretel—who knew the way of apartment houses—pushed open the door and stepped into a dark, narrow hall. There was no one to be seen, but a mingled odor of onions and cabbage proved that the house was inhabited, and Gretel made her way up the steep, not very clean stairs to the third floor.

She had reached the top of the first flight, when a voice inquired over the banisters:

"Is it Mees Schiller?"

"Yes," said Gretel. "Is that you, Mrs. Becker?"

"It ess. Come right up, if you please."

Gretel quickened her steps, and in another moment was shaking hands with a stout, middle-aged woman, whom she at once recognized as Fräulein's aunt.

"Mr. Becker telephoned me," she explained, "and I came as quickly as I could. I am so

sorry about Fräulein. Is she suffering a great deal?"

"Come in," said Mrs. Becker, and she led the way to her apartment, the door of which stood open.

Gretel followed her down the narrow hall to the parlor, a small room, furnished in very bad taste.

"Sit down," said the hostess, motioning to the plush-covered sofa, but Gretel did not sit down.

"I haven't long to stay," she apologized. "Couldn't I see Fräulein now?"

Mrs. Becker heaved a deep sigh.

"Our dear Anna is not here," she said, solemnly; "they have taken her away to the hospital."

"Oh," cried Gretel, "is she really so ill as that? Mr. Becker said she was to have an operation, but I didn't think it was to be this afternoon. He said she wanted to see me. Did she get worse after he telephoned?"

"Our dear Anna is very ill," said Mrs. Becker, speaking as if she were repeating a

lesson. "They have taken her to the hospital. Will you not sit down and take coffee with us? I will bring it in at once."

"You are very kind," said Gretel, "but I don't think I can wait. Perhaps I might be able to see Fräulein at the hospital. Mr. Becker said she was so very anxious to see me, and I am going to Washington with my brother to-night."

"You cannot go to the hospital," said Mrs. Becker, in the same dull voice; "it would not be allowed. Even I, Anna's aunt, cannot go. My husband will explain." And once more motioning towards the plush-covered sofa, Mrs. Becker left the room.

Gretel sat down on the edge of the sofa. There seemed nothing else to do, but she was beginning to feel very uncomfortable. She was afraid her old friend must be very ill, Mrs. Becker spoke and looked so strangely. Perhaps Fräulein had died suddenly, and they did not like to tell her. There was a moment of silence; then the sound of approaching footsteps, and Fräulein's uncle came into the room.

"I beg a thousand pardons for bringing you here under false pretenses," he said, apologetically, "but when I telephoned an hour ago my dear niece—what is it, my dear young lady —are you not well?"

With a little inarticulate cry, Gretel had sunk back on the sofa, and every particle of color had left her face. As the light from the one window fell on Mr. Becker's face, she recognized it. She knew now why the face of that waiter at the New London hotel had seemed so familiar. That waiter was Fräulein's uncle!

CHAPTER XI

GRETEL PROVES HER LOYALTY

GRETEL started to her feet, with a wild, half-formed idea of making her escape, but the portly form of Mr. Becker stood between her and the door, and she sat down again, feeling suddenly cold, and rather sick.

"Do not agitate yourself so much," Mr. Becker was saying, soothingly. "It is true that our beloved Anna is very ill, but the doctors have great hopes for the result of the operation. I am sorry that you have had your trip for nothing, but it could not be helped. Now that you are here, you will surely stay and have coffee with us. My wife will have it ready in a few moments."

"I am afraid I can't possibly stay," protested Gretel. "I only came to see Fräulein because you said she wanted me. My brother will be waiting for me. I went out in such a

hurry that I forgot to mention where I was going."

Mr. Becker glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"There is plenty of time to spare," he said; "it is not yet five o'clock. Surely you will not deprive Mrs. Becker and me of the great pleasure of offering hospitality to Hermann Schiller's daughter?"

His manner was so kind and courteous that Gretel was beginning to feel rather ashamed of her first suspicion. So she made no further effort to rise, and even forced a faint smile.

"Did you know my father?" she asked, stiffly. It was the first time in her life that praise of her adored father had not caused her heart to swell with pride.

"I did not have the honor of his personal acquaintance," Mr. Becker admitted, "but his art! Oh, Miss Schiller, what an artist he was!" Mr. Becker heaved a deep sigh, and raised his eyes to the ceiling.

Before Gretel could speak again, there was a rattling of crockery, and Mrs. Becker re-

appeared, bearing a tray containing hot coffee and thick slices of brown bread and butter. Setting the tray on the centre table, she requested her husband and Gretel, in the same dull tone as before, to "come and eat." Gretel was very uncomfortable, and very anxious to get away, but she dared not refuse the invitation, and Mrs. Becker poured her out a cup of the steaming coffee.

"This is indeed a great pleasure," remarked Mr. Becker, smiling benignly. "We are proud, are we not, Gertrude, to have the daughter of the great Hermann Schiller drink coffee with us?"

"Certainly we are proud," murmured Mrs. Becker, obediently, but the expression of her face did not change in the slightest, and Gretel, knowing how anxious she must be about her niece, felt very sorry for her. She was also a good deal surprised by Mr. Becker's manner, for on former occasions when she had gone to see Fräulein, that gentleman had taken very little notice of her.

"Your father was not only a great artist,

Miss Schiller," the host went on, sipping his coffee. "He was a great patriot as well. If there were more men like him alive to-day, it might be better for our poor country."

Gretel's face brightened. Perhaps, after all, she had been mistaken. The likeness was certainly startling, but then people sometimes did look alike.

"I am sure this war would have made Father very unhappy," she said. "He was so kind and gentle; he hated everything cruel."

"All good Germans hate what is cruel," Mr. Becker assured her. "All war is terrible, but there are times when stern methods must be used. The sterner the method, the sooner the fighting will be over."

Gretel could not repress a slight shudder; Mr. Becker's voice sounded so fierce and determined. She glanced at Mrs. Becker, but her expression remained unchanged.

"Your father loved his country better than anything else in the world," Mr. Becker went on, solemnly. "I once had the pleasure of hearing him speak at a dinner given for the

German Ambassador, and it was one of the most stirring speeches I have ever listened to in my life. I wish I possessed a copy, that I might read it to you."

"I should like to hear anything Father ever said," said Gretel, with an uneasy glance towards the clock.

"I am sure you would, but, alas! I fear it is impossible. That speech was delivered more than ten years ago, but I am convinced that Hermann never wavered in his love and allegiance to the Fatherland. I hope his daughter loves her country as well."

"I hope I do," said Gretel, blushing. "I would love to help my country, but there isn't much a girl of my age can do, except knit for the soldiers, and make bandages and surgical dressings for the Red Cross."

Mr. Becker's face was fairly beaming at her across the table.

"You cannot be sure about that," he said. "In these days there is work for all to do. No one is too young or too ignorant to help. You

may not realize it, but you have a great opportunity before you."

"I!" cried Gretel, opening her eyes in genuine astonishment. "Why, what can I do?"

Mr. Becker smiled a rather peculiar smile.

"You are going to Washington," he said, "and you have been visiting in New London. One often sees and hears things that might be of great service to the Government, and which should be reported."

Gretel remembered Fritz Lippheim, and her cheeks grew crimson. Was it possible that Fräulein's uncle knew of that meeting, and was going to reprove her for not betraying her old friend? She did not speak, and in a moment Mr. Becker went on.

"Your brother, I understand, holds an important position in Washington. You are likely to meet many interesting people, and may hear things which will be very valuable to us. You understand what I mean, do you not?"

Gretel gave a violent start, and her heart began to beat very fast.

"I don't think I do understand," she said. "Do you mean that I should tell my brother everything I see and hear? I would do that naturally, of course, but sometimes one happens to meet an old friend, just by accident, and ——"

Gretel paused, abruptly, struck by the altered expression of Mr. Becker's face. He still smiled, but his smile had changed.

"I think perhaps you do understand a little better than you care to show," he said, mysteriously. "I must give you credit, my dear young lady, for being much cleverer than I supposed."

Gretel pushed back her chair from the table, and rose.

"I really cannot stay any longer," she said, hurriedly. "I am afraid my brother will be anxious about me. Good-bye, Mrs. Becker. I am terribly sorry about Fräulein. Perhaps you will send me a line to let me know how she gets on. My address is ——"

"Sit down!" thundered Mr. Becker, in a voice so changed that Gretel dropped back into her chair, shaking from head to foot.

"I think we are misunderstanding each other," the man went on, in a quieter tone, but with eyes fixed sternly on Gretel's face. "When I ask Hermann Schiller's daughter if she wishes to help her country, I naturally suppose she knows what country I mean."

"I thought you meant my own country," faltered Gretel. "I am an American."

"An American!" repeated Mr. Becker, scornfully. "Hermann Schiller's daughter an American! It is impossible! I will not believe it."

"My mother was an American," said Gretel, "and I was born here in New York. I have always loved Germany, for my father's sake, but if he were alive now, I know he would not approve of the dreadful things the Germans are doing." Gretel was horribly frightened, and yet, oddly enough, she had never felt so truly an American as she did at that moment.

There was a moment of intense silence, during which Mr. Becker continued to regard his visitor with stern, incredulous eyes. Then the man said, slowly:

"I see. You have been deceived, like so many others. You have been told only one side of this great question. Otherwise, nothing will persuade me to believe the daughter of a German patriot would turn her back on the Fatherland in her hour of need. Listen, and I will try to explain the truth to you. Germany is fighting for her existence. She has been cheated, deceived—do you understand?"

Mr. Becker talked on steadily for the next ten minutes, but Gretel scarcely heard a word he said. Her eyes were on the clock, and her sole thought was of making her escape. Oh, why had she ever come here, even for Fräulein's sake? Would that dreadful man never stop talking, and let her go home? At last Mr. Becker paused.

"Have I made the situation any more clear to you?" he inquired, sharply.

"I—I don't know," faltered Gretel. "I know you think Germany is in the right—I suppose all Germans do—but I am an American. Now will you please let me go? It is getting very late."

Mr. Becker turned furiously upon his wife.

"What did that fool Anna mean by telling us this girl was a German?" he demanded. "She gave us to understand the child could be useful to the cause."

"Oh, Rudolph," protested Mrs. Becker, beginning to cry, "it is not my fault, I am sure. I only told you what Anna said. Indeed, I am not to blame."

"Not to blame!" her husband repeated, fiercely; "but where is the use in blaming fools? As to you, young lady, I find I have made a mistake. I thought I was speaking to a German, but I see you have no desire to help your father's people. But there is one thing you must and shall do before you leave this room. You shall solemnly swear never to repeat to a living soul one word of what has passed here this afternoon. You must swear

not even to mention having been to this house. Otherwise, I shall not let you go."

Gretel was very white. She felt sick and faint, and more frightened than she had ever been in her life. But through all her terror she seemed to hear Ada Godfrey's clear voice proclaiming:

"Any one who doesn't report a suspect is a disloyal American citizen."

"I can't be disloyal to my country," she told herself, desperately. "Perhaps I shall be killed, but it would be better to die than be disloyal."

Mr. Becker went into an adjoining room, whence he returned, carrying a large German Bible, which he laid upon the table.

"Are you prepared to swear?" he demanded, sternly. "Even if you are not willing to help Germany, I scarcely suppose you are willing to have your father's people punished through any fault or mistake of yours. I believe you are to be trusted in so far as that. Will you swear?"

Gretel's white lips moved, but no sound

"I BELIEVE YOU ARE TO BE TRUSTED IN SO FAR AS THAT."
Page 224.

came from them. She resolutely shook her head. Mrs. Becker clasped her hands, with an exclamation of dismay.

Mr. Becker laid a heavy hand on the girl's trembling shoulder.

"Do you realize what you are doing?" he asked, and his voice shook a little, but whether with anger or fear Gretel did not know.

"I can't swear not to tell," she whispered. "It would be disloyal to my brother, and—and to my country."

"Then," said Mr. Becker, sternly, "you will not be allowed to leave this house. Do you understand what that means?"

Gretel gave a little frightened sob. She glanced towards the open window, with some wild idea of screaming for help, but as if anticipating her intention, Mr. Becker sprang across the room and closed the window with a bang.

"Now," said the man, turning fiercely upon her again, "perhaps you will realize that I am in earnest. I will give you one more chance. Will you solemnly swear not to mention to

any human being where you have been this afternoon, or repeat one word of what has passed?"

Again Gretel shook her head.

"I can't swear," she whispered, in a voice so unlike her own that it startled her.

Mr. Becker seized her roughly by the arm. His eyes were blazing with anger.

"You little fool!" he cried. "You little obstinate fool!"

He half led, half dragged her out of the room, down the narrow hall of the apartment.

"Go in there!" he commanded, "and, remember, if you make one sound, try in any way to attract attention, you will have a gag put into your mouth. That will not be pleasant, so you had best do as I say. There are other Germans in this house, besides myself, and they know what loyalty to their country sometimes requires."

In another moment Gretel found herself in a small dark room; the door was closed, and she heard the turning of the key in the lock. She was a prisoner.

It had all been so sudden, so unexpected, that for the first few minutes Gretel scarcely believed it was true. It seemed so much more like the things that happened in bad dreams that she half expected to wake up suddenly and find herself on the library sofa, where she had been dozing when Mr. Becker's summons came. But gradually the awful truth began to dawn upon her, and then she sank down in a little heap on the floor, and lay there, moaning in a terror greater than any she had ever known in her life.

How long she lay there she did not know, but at last she raised her head and began to look about her. The room had no window, but was lighted from a skylight, and although very hot and stuffy, it was not without air. It was evidently used as a storeroom, for the only furniture it contained were several trunks and boxes, and everything was plentifully sprinkled with dust. There was light enough to enable her to look about, but she could see no means of escape, or even of attracting attention, had she dared to do so after Mr. Becker's

dreadful threat. It must be after six o'clock by this time, she was sure, and Percy would soon be coming for her. Oh, what would he think?—what would everybody think? She got up off the floor, and began walking rapidly up and down the narrow limits of her prison. She felt along the wall with her hands, in the wild hope of finding some means of escape, but, alas! there was only the one door, and that was locked. With a cry of despair, she sank down on one of the trunks and burst into an agony of tears.

She cried until she was utterly exhausted, and then sat, leaning her head against the wall, in a kind of hopeless despair. She had no means of knowing what time it was, but from the diminished light she felt sure it must be getting dark. Percy would be waiting for her by this time—growing more anxious every moment. He would telephone the Barlows, but they would know nothing. Oh, why had she not told Mrs. Murphy where she was going? In that case Percy might have found her, but now ——

Gretel's reflections were cut short by the turning of the key; the door swung open and revealed Mr. Becker standing on the threshold, and his wife close behind him. Mrs. Becker carried a tray.

"My wife has brought your supper," said the man, shortly. "You may bring in the tray, Gertrude."

Mrs. Becker came in and set the tray down on one of the trunks. There was a gas-jet in the room, and the woman struck a match and lighted it. Gretel noticed that Mrs. Becker's eyes were red and swollen. She also noticed that the tray contained a well-filled plate of some kind of stew, as well as several slices of bread and butter, and a glass of water.

"I will come back in half an hour to take away the things," Mr. Becker announced, "so you had best eat at once."

Gretel clasped her hands imploringly.

"Please, please let me go!" she cried, tremulously, but the man only shook his head, and in another moment the door was closed again, and the key turned in the lock.

In spite of Mr. Becker's advice to "eat at once," Gretel did not begin her supper. Indeed, she felt no desire for food of any kind. The smell of the steaming stew, plentifully seasoned with onions, made her so sick that she moved as far as possible from the tray, and sat down on a box in the corner. She was growing more and more frightened every moment. If they kept her there all night she was sure she should die of fright. And yet, strange to say, even at that moment, the idea of securing her liberty by making the required promise never entered her mind.

At the end of the stipulated half hour Mrs. Becker returned, but this time she came alone. She glanced at the untouched food, and then at Gretel.

"Don't you like your supper?" she inquired, not without some surprise in her tone. "The stew is good. I made it myself."

"I am not hungry," said Gretel. "Oh, Mrs. Becker," she added, eagerly, "can't you persuade your husband to let me go home? My brother will be so terribly worried."

Mrs. Becker softly closed the door and stood with her back against it.

"You ought not to have made Rudolph so angry," she said in a frightened whisper. "You should have done what he asked. I never disobey him, never."

"But I couldn't do what he asked," cried Gretel. "Oh, Mrs. Becker, don't you see I couldn't? I am an American."

"Well, what does that matter? Your father was a German; you should be a German, too. Now you have made my husband angry, and Heaven knows what will happen. Rudolph is a great patriot; he is working for the Fatherland. No one suspects, but if you told what he said to you, it would do terrible harm to the cause. Rudolph's life might be in danger, and his friends' lives, too. He has two friends in there with him now." Mrs. Becker opened the door a crack as she spoke, and Gretel caught the sound of men's voices. They were not talking loud, but their voices sounded excited, and she could even distinguish a few German words she knew.

"You hear?" said the woman, and heaved a long sigh.

Gretel burst into tears.

"Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?" she sobbed. "No one has any idea where I am. They will never be able to find me. Mrs. Becker, for the love of Heaven, help me to get away."

"It is indeed terrible," sighed Mrs. Becker, "but it is all your own fault. If you had obeyed my husband, you would have been at home hours ago. I am very sorry, but there is nothing I can do. Rudolph says I may bring in a mattress and a pillow, and in the morning I will bring your breakfast, and some water, so that you may wash."

She was turning to leave the room when Gretel suddenly remembered something.

"Oh, Mrs. Becker," she said, anxiously, "have you heard anything from the hospital yet?"

"The hospital," repeated Mrs. Becker, looking puzzled; "why should I hear from a hospital?"

"Why, about Fräulein, of course," gasped Gretel. "You said they had taken her to the hospital for an operation."

"Oh, Anna, you mean," said Mrs. Becker, her dull face lighting with comprehension. "Rudolph told me to say Anna was in a hospital, but it was not true. She is in New Jersey, governess to two little boys. She left nearly two weeks ago, just before my husband and I moved here."

"But—but why did you send for me, then?" questioned the astonished Gretel. "I thought it was because Fräulein was ill and wanted to see me."

"My husband sent for you," said Mrs. Becker, slowly, "because Anna had told us you were a good German. He thought you might be of use to him, but he made a mistake, and so he is very angry."

CHAPTER XII

LOST

THEY were having a merry evening at the Chesters'. Stephen Cranston and Jimmy Fairfax had come to dinner, and later, Ada Godfrey and her friends, including the objectionable Archie, had strolled over, in response to a telephone message from hospitable Molly. They had sat on the piazza for a while, the girls comparing notes about last evening's dance, the boys discussing the latest German air raid, and then Stephen—who was generally the chief mover in every party—had suggested impromptu charades.

"We won't have to dress up, or anything like that," he exclaimed. "We'll just divide, and one side will act out a word, while the other side guesses it."

Several words had been successfully acted and guessed, and the audience was puzzling

over the second syllable of "July," represented by Jerry lying flat on his back, while Paul and Geraldine used their united efforts in an endeavor to raise him, when a servant appeared with a whispered message to Mrs. Chester, who immediately rose and went indoors.

"It can't be 'Mule,'" said Molly, still intent on the word, "though Jerry certainly does act like one, lying there, and falling back every time they try to make him get up. I'm sure the first syllable was 'Stingy' or 'Mean,' but then that wouldn't make sense. What do you think the word is, Aunt Dulcie? You generally guess everything."

"Wait till we see the next syllable," said Mrs. Cranston. "I never commit myself too soon."

The actors had gone into the house to prepare for the acting of the whole word, and at that moment Stephen appeared in the doorway.

"Hurry up, Steve," called Molly. "We're all waiting."

"Aunt Molly wants to speak to you, Mother," said Stephen, and, to everybody's surprise, his voice sounded grave and a little startled as well. "She would like to speak to you, too, Molly."

Mrs. Cranston and her niece rose hurriedly, and went into the house. Stephen also disappeared, and the others were left to form their own conjectures.

"What do you suppose has happened?" questioned Kitty, anxiously. "I hope it isn't bad news for any of us. My family were all right this morning when Mother telephoned, but things do happen so suddenly sometimes."

"I don't believe it's anything important," said Ada, cheerfully. "Perhaps it's a message from Mrs. Cranston's publisher, offering her an enormous price for her next book."

Everybody laughed at this suggestion, and Jimmy said he had never heard of publishers sending communications to their clients at night. "It's probably a message from Mr. Chester. I hope the Germans haven't sunk

another ship." Just then Jerry and Paul appeared, and Kitty inquired, eagerly:

"Is anything the matter?"

"I don't know," said Jerry. "They've all gone into the library, and shut the door. I heard Mrs. Chester talking on the 'phone, but couldn't make out what she was saying. We've decided not to act the rest of the word till they come out. Here comes Molly now. Is it all right, Molly? Shall we go on?"

But one glance at Molly's pale, startled face was sufficient to convince them all that it was not all right. Without answering Jerry's question, she hurried across the piazza and seized Kitty by the arm.

"Something dreadful has happened," she gasped. "Gretel is lost."

"Lost!" cried several voices, in a tone of incredulous amazement. And Ada added, impatiently:

"What on earth are you talking about, Molly?"

"It's true," said Molly, in a low, frightened voice. "She went out early this afternoon,

and hasn't come back yet. Nobody knows where she is. Her brother has been telephoning everywhere, and now Father has called up here to find out if any of us heard her say what she intended doing. Geraldine says she asked Gretel to go and see her mother, but they've telephoned the Barlows, and they don't know anything about her. She hasn't been there at all. Come in, Kitty. Geraldine's in an awful state."

The two girls hurried away, followed by Jerry, and the others sat looking at each other in silent astonishment. It seemed as if a pall had suddenly fallen on the merry little party.

"It's the most awful thing I ever heard in my life!" declared Ada's friend, Betty Ross, in a tone of mingled horror and excitement. "Why, it's after nine o'clock. Think of a girl staying out till this time and not letting her family know where she is. She's German, isn't she?"

"Her father was," said Ada, "but her brother is an American. He is doing Government work in Washington, and Gretel was to

go home with him on to-night's train. Oh, I hope nothing dreadful has happened to her." And Ada—who was really not a hard-hearted girl—looked very much distressed.

"Perhaps she's a spy, and gone off to tell the Germans things she's found out here in New London." The words made every one jump. They were uttered in Archie Davenport's shrill, aggressive voice, and that objectionable small boy—who had been a rather bored spectator of the charades—now made himself heard for the first time.

"Hush, Archie; for shame!" cried his cousin, indignantly. But Archie was not to be easily put down.

"Things like that do happen," he maintained stoutly. "I was reading a book the other day, all about a girl spy, and she wasn't any older than this one, either. So why ——"

"Archie, hold your tongue, I tell you." In the excitement of the moment, Ada quite forgot that she was a young lady, and brought her foot down on the piazza floor with a decided stamp. "He reads such trashy books,

he gets his head full of nonsense," she added by way of explanation to the others. "People we know don't do things of that kind. Besides, Gretel isn't really German herself. She doesn't even know ——"

Ada paused abruptly. She had suddenly remembered something. Jimmy Fairfax also remembered, and the two exchanged a startled glance. Neither spoke, however, and in a few minutes Ada rose and walked away to the end of the piazza, where she was quickly joined by her indignant cousin.

"I don't see what makes you so cross," complained the injured Archie. "I didn't say anything I oughtn't to. You know there are a lot of German spies, just as well as I do, and you said the other day you were surprised they let the Schiller girl go to the naval station with the others, because of her German name."

"I never said Gretel was a spy," snapped Ada. "I never thought of such a thing. You mustn't talk about such dreadful possibilities. Gretel is a friend of mine."

"I wouldn't have a German friend," began

Archie, patriotically, but he got no further, for at that moment Jimmy Fairfax joined them, and he deemed it prudent to keep his ideas to himself, remembering Stephen Cranston's remarks on a similar occasion. Jimmy was looking both grave and troubled.

"May I speak to you for a moment alone?" he asked Ada, in a rather low voice.

"Certainly. Run away, Archie; I want to talk to Mr. Fairfax. Go and see what they are doing about Gretel. They may have heard something more."

Archie retired obediently, but he did not join the rest of the party. Neither did he go as far away as Ada expected.

"I'm a good deal worried about what I told you last night," Jimmy began, as soon as Ada's small cousin was supposedly out of hearing. "Of course, the man I saw talking to Gretel Schiller may not have been a German, or even if he were one, Mrs. Chester may know all about the matter. But if the girl has really disappeared, do you think it is my duty to tell Mrs. Chester what I saw that day?"

Ada hesitated. She did not want to injure Gretel, and yet Gretel was a German, and there were so many strange stories going about.

"I think perhaps we'd better wait a little while," she compromised. "Gretel may come home all right, and everything be explained. But if she really has disappeared, I suppose we shall have to tell all we know." Ada's voice was solemn, but she was not quite free from a little thrill of excitement at the prospect of possibly being the means of unearthing some deep-laid German plot.

"It's a horribly uncomfortable position," said Jimmy, regretfully. "I hate to tell tales, and yet what I saw might furnish a clue. Besides, our duty as loyal Americans ——"

"Of course, it will be our duty to tell, if Gretel isn't found this evening," interrupted Ada. "We must think of our country before everything else in these days, you know. I wish the Chesters hadn't taken Gretel to visit the submarine base. No German is allowed near the place, but they felt so sure she was a

loyal American, and Stephen vouched for her. You don't suppose she could have found out any important secrets, do you?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I don't see how that could be possible," he said. "She might imagine she had found out something, though. Oh, I dare say it's all perfectly right and we shall hear in a few minutes that Miss Gretel has been to see a friend, and stayed later than she intended. Such scares generally end in nothing."

"Let's go in and find out what is happening," suggested Ada, and the two moved away towards the front door. Neither of them noticed a small figure standing in the shadow of one of the windows, or heard a malicious chuckle from Archie as they passed his hiding-place.

The scene in the library was anything but reassuring. Molly and Geraldine were both crying; Kitty was twisting her handkerchief into knots and looking decidedly frightened, and Mrs. Chester, Mrs. Cranston and Stephen were talking together in low, anxious voices.

"She's been run over and killed, I know she has," wailed Geraldine. "She was run over once before, when she was a little girl, but she got well that time. Now it's different. Oh, Gretel, Gretel, it's too dreadful!" And poor Geraldine broke down completely, and sobbed on Molly's shoulder.

Mrs. Cranston left her sister and her son and put a protecting arm round the trembling girl.

"Don't, dear," she said, soothingly. "Things may not be as bad as you think; Gretel may soon be found. We must all try to have a little patience. Mr. Douaine and Mr. Chester are doing all they can."

"Does any one know what happened?" Jimmy Fairfax asked Stephen, in a low voice.

"Nothing beyond the fact that Gretel went out alone early in the afternoon, and has not come home since. She left no message beyond telling the caretaker that she was going out for a little while. Mr. Douaine reached home a little before seven, and when he found his sister had not come in, he telephoned to every

place where he thought it possible she could have gone. He finally succeeded in getting my uncle, who told him he had left Gretel at home about noon. They thought it possible she might have mentioned to some one here how she intended spending the afternoon, but it seems the only thing she spoke of doing was calling at the Barlows', and she never turned up there."

Jimmy looked very grave.

"Is there anything we can do?" he asked.

Stephen shook his head.

"Uncle Paul has promised to call us up again in an hour," he said, "to let us know if anything has been discovered. I shall stay here till then. You can take the car back to the station, if you like. I don't mind walking."

"I think I will wait, too," said Jimmy, quietly.

The hour that followed was a very trying one for everybody. No one even remembered the unfinished charade. Ada and her friends went home, after exacting a promise from

Molly to call up the moment there was any news, and the others sat on the piazza in the starlight and waited. Geraldine had stopped crying, but sat close to Mrs. Cranston, holding her hand, as if finding comfort in the mere fact of being near one so kind and sensible as Stephen's mother. Paul and Frank were sent to bed, but Jerry refused to go and sat on the steps at his twin sister's feet, perhaps finding more comfort there than he would have cared to admit. Jerry was not a demonstrative boy, but he loved Geraldine better than any one else in the world, and Gretel also held a very warm place in his heart. Molly and Kitty whispered together in the hammock and Stephen and his aunt walked up and down the piazza, arm in arm.

"It's ten o'clock!" exclaimed Geraldine, as the chiming of the grandfather's clock on the stairs fell upon their ears. "It's more than an hour since Mr. Chester telephoned."

"We shall hear something in a few minutes, I am sure," Mrs. Cranston said. "It often takes some time to get long distance, you

know. Ah, I thought so. There's the telephone now."

It was Stephen who reached it first, and was talking when the others entered the library.

"Is that you, Uncle Paul? Yes, I can hear you all right. Any news?"

There was a breathless pause while Mr. Chester talked at the other end of the wire. Then Stephen hung up the receiver. One glance at his face was enough to tell them there was no good news.

"They haven't found her yet," he said. "They don't think she has met with an accident, though, for Mr. Douaine has telephoned all the hospitals, and no one answering her description has been brought in. Mr. Douaine has put the case in the hands of the police. Uncle Paul says he will call up again early in the morning."

"Mrs. Chester, may I speak to you a moment?"

Mrs. Chester—who had been trying to soothe the hysterical Geraldine—turned at the sound

of the voice, and found Jimmy Fairfax standing by her side.

"Certainly," she said, and followed the young man out into the empty hall.

"I have something to tell you which may possibly throw some light on this affair," Jimmy said, hurriedly. "Do you happen to know whether Miss Gretel had any German friends here in New London?"

"I know she had not," Mrs. Chester answered positively. "Gretel had no German friends whatever. Would you mind telling me what you have to say as quickly as possible? I am afraid Geraldine is getting hysterical."

When Mrs. Chester returned to the library, she was looking more puzzled and perplexed than ever, and there were two bright red spots burning in her cheeks.

There was little sleep for any one at the Chesters' that night. The two young men were obliged to return to the naval station, but Mrs. Cranston promised to telephone her son the moment there was any news. Then Mrs.

Chester insisted on their all going to bed. Nothing could be gained by sitting up, she said, and they were not likely to hear anything more before morning.

"There is a telephone switch in my room," she added, "and if a message should come during the night I will let you know at once."

Geraldine—who still clung passionately to Mrs. Cranston—begged not to be left alone, and Stephen's mother readily promised to come and sleep with her. Molly and Kitty went quietly away to their room, and Jerry stumbled up-stairs to the third floor, devoutly hoping that no one would notice the tears, which, big boy though he was, refused to be kept back any longer.

Mrs. Cranston was in her room, preparing for the night, when there was a tap at the door, and her sister came in.

"I want to speak to you, Dulcie," she said. "That Fairfax boy has been telling me a story, which has made me very uncomfortable. It seems he saw Gretel talking with a man—he is sure he was a German—in New London

one afternoon. It was the day you came and Gretel and I went to the station to meet you. We both had shopping to do, and she left me to buy some wool. I had to wait a few minutes for her, and Jimmy Fairfax joined me. We were talking when Gretel came back. She apologized for keeping me waiting, but did not mention having met any one she knew. Young Fairfax says she seemed to be talking very earnestly with this man, and before he could speak to her they had turned down one of the side streets together. Now, Molly has told me that Gretel had no German friends. It seems rather strange, don't you think so? Do you think we ought to mention this story? It might possibly throw some light on the child's disappearance."

"I imagine the whole thing is mere nonsense," declared Mrs. Cranston, decidedly. "Probably the man was not a German at all. Even if he were, nothing will ever make me believe that girl has done anything wrong or deceitful. I should as soon think of doubting Steve as doubting her."

Mrs. Chester looked very much relieved.

"I am glad you feel that way," she said. "I cannot doubt Gretel either, she is so honest and straightforward about everything, but I thought she might possibly have met some old German friend, and ——"

"Well, so she may have done. It is even possible that he may have asked her not to mention the meeting, though I scarcely think that likely. But whatever happened, I am sure the child was not to blame, and I do not believe it has any connection with her disappearance. Of course, it may become necessary to tell her brother what we have heard. We have no right to keep anything back under the circumstances, but I always trust my instincts, and I liked Gretel from the first moment I saw her. I am positive that girl is not in any way to blame for what has happened."

More than once Mrs. Cranston repeated those words to herself during the hours of the long, wakeful night. Geraldine cried herself to sleep at last, but her companion lay awake for hours, thinking with an aching heart of the

girl she had grown to love, over whose disappearance there hung such a dark curtain of mystery.

Geraldine was awake again almost as soon as it was light, begging to be allowed to get up and go down-stairs.

"Mr. Chester promised to telephone the first thing in the morning," she pleaded feverishly, "and I want to be there when the message comes."

Mrs. Cranston, seeing the uselessness in trying to keep the girl in bed, yielded to her persuasions, and Geraldine was on her way down-stairs when the clocks were striking five. But early as she was, some one else was before her, for on entering the library she found Jerry curled up on the sofa, fast asleep.

At Geraldine's exclamation of surprise, her twin sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Hello!" he said, staring about him sleepily. "Oh, it's you, Geraldine. I must have just dropped off for a minute."

"How long have you been down here?" his sister inquired.

"I don't know exactly," answered Jerry, with a yawn. "I kept waking up all the time, and I got tired of listening to Paul snore, so thought I might as well get up and come down here, just in case the telephone should ring, you know."

Geraldine sat down on the sofa and laid her head on her brother's shoulder.

"That's what I came for, too," she said. "It's only just five, but Mrs. Cranston said I might get up if I liked. After all, I remember there is a telephone switch in Mrs. Chester's bedroom, but I'm glad I came, anyway, now you're here, too. Oh, Jerry dear, I'm so terribly unhappy. Gretel is my best friend, and I'm sure something dreadful has happened to her."

Jerry and Geraldine were not the only people in the house who listened anxiously for the sound of the telephone bell, but it was eight o'clock before the long-expected message came, and then, alas! it brought no good news. The police had been working on the case all night, but as yet they had found no clue. Indeed,

there was very little to go upon. It seemed as if Gretel had been swallowed up in the earth. Sorely against her will, but feeling it the only thing to be done under the circumstances, Mrs. Chester repeated to her husband the story Jimmy Fairfax had told her.

"Neither Dulcie nor I believe one word against the child," she finished, "but it is just possible she may have met some old German friend and been ashamed to mention the fact to us."

Mr. Chester said that he would tell Gretel's brother, but agreed with his wife in the opinion that the story was not likely to throw much light upon the girl's mysterious disappearance.

The effect of Mr. Chester's message was very depressing. Geraldine begged to be allowed to go home at once.

"I can't stay here till Monday," she told Mrs. Chester. "It will seem nearer to Gretel if I am in New York. Jerry wants to go, too."

Mrs. Chester and her sister talked the matter over and it was decided that if the twins

wanted to go, it would be best to let them have their way. It was quite impossible that they could enjoy themselves any longer in New London. So a telegram was dispatched to Mrs. Barlow, and Geraldine went up to her room to pack, accompanied by Molly, who was only a trifle less miserable than herself. They were in the midst of folding dresses when Kitty appeared, with the announcement that Ada Godfrey had come over to inquire for news.

"She's on the piazza," she added, "talking to Mrs. Cranston, and that horrid Davenport boy is with her."

"I hate that boy," declared Molly. "I should think Ada would know enough to keep him away from here. Do you remember how rude he was to Gretel that Sunday afternoon? Tell Ada I'll be right down. You won't want to come, I know, Geraldine."

"I don't think I could talk to Ada to-day," said Geraldine, "and as for that Davenport boy, I hope he'll go home before Jerry sees him. Jerry wanted to punch his head before,

for being horrid to Gretel. If they should meet to-day I don't know what would happen."

Molly and Kitty departed, leaving Geraldine to finish her packing, with the assistance of Mrs. Chester's maid. They found Ada on the piazza, but Archie Davenport was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's your cousin?" Molly asked, mindful of Geraldine's fears.

"Gone off somewhere to look for the boys, I think," Ada answered indifferently. "Oh, girls, isn't it terrible about Gretel? What do you suppose has become of her?"

Before either Molly or Kitty could answer, they were all startled by the sound of shouting, and little Frank Chester came running round the corner from the stable, flushed and breathless from haste and excitement.

"Oh, come, come quick!" he implored. "Jerry's killing Archie Davenport. He's got him down on the ground, and he's rolling him over and over and pummelling him like everything."

With an exclamation of horror, the three

girls sprang to their feet, and at the same instant Stephen Cranston's "Ford" came dashing up to the front door, and that young gentleman himself sprang out.

"Any news?" he demanded eagerly, but nobody answered him. Molly seized his arm.

"Come, Steve," she cried, "don't wait to ask any questions. Jerry is beating Archie Davenport, and we've got to stop them before Archie is killed."

Archie was not killed, but he presented a very forlorn-looking appearance when the party arrived at the scene of action. Covered with dust, one eye closed and blood pouring from his nose, he sat ignominiously on the ground, while Jerry—his own nose bleeding profusely—towered above him, his eyes blazing with wrath.

"Apologize," Jerry commanded, "apologize this minute, or I'll do it again!"

"I—I apologize," faltered Archie, beginning to cry. "You're a wicked boy, though, and I'll have you arrested for treating me like this, see if I don't."

"What was the trouble, Jerry?" Stephen inquired, while Ada fell upon her cousin with a torrent of mingled sympathy and reproach.

"He said something he had no business to," returned Jerry. "I'd rather not repeat it, if you don't mind. It was a lie, and that's enough for anybody to know."

"Archie, you didn't say anything horrid about Gretel!" cried Ada, indignantly. "If you did I'm not a bit sorry he made your nose bleed."

"I only said ——" began Archie, but Jerry cut him short.

"None of that now, do you hear? You say one more word, and you'll get something more from me. I'd kill any fellow who dared say a word against Gretel, even if he were twice my size."

"Jerry, you're a trump!" cried Stephen, giving the boy a sounding slap on the back. "I honor you. Now go into the house and wash your face. As for you, you little cad," he added, turning to the crestfallen Archie, "you deserve ten times more than you've got,

and I hope I shall never see you on this place again." And, quite regardless of Ada's reproachful glances, he turned and followed Jerry back to the house.

CHAPTER XIII

SUSPENSE

"DON'T you really think, Geraldine, that you could manage to sit still for at least five minutes?"

Mrs. Barlow's tone was plaintive, as she lifted her head from the sofa cushions in her darkened bedroom. Geraldine turned from the open window, where she had been trying to peep through the closed blinds, and came over to her mother's side.

"I'm sorry I bother you, Mummy," she said. "I really am trying to keep quiet, but it's so hard to settle down to anything. I suppose I'm nervous."

"Nervous!" repeated Mrs. Barlow, with a sigh; "I should think you were! We are all nervous, for that matter, and who can wonder at it. I haven't had a good night's sleep since it happened, and if it were not for the bromide

Dr. Trevor gives me, I'm sure I don't know where I should be now. As it is, my head is splitting."

"Let me bathe it with cologne," proposed Geraldine, eager for any occupation, "or else let me fan you."

"The scent of the cologne makes me ill, but you may fan me if you like. This heat is frightful. I am sure the thermometer must be up to ninety. Don't you want to go and look?"

"Where's the use? You'll only feel worse if you know how hot it is. It's cooler in this room than anywhere else. The sun doesn't come here till afternoon. Then you can go into the library."

"I'd rather stay here. The noise in the front of the house drives me frantic. I was never in town at this season before in my life. If it doesn't get cooler in a day or two, I shall have to persuade your father to take us to the shore."

"You wouldn't go away now, Mother, would you?—not before Gretel is found."

Mrs. Barlow sighed again, and passed her hand wearily across her forehead.

"If there were only a chance of the dear child's being found," she murmured, "but it all seems so hopeless. A week yesterday since she disappeared, and not the faintest clue yet. Oh, Geraldine, darling, just think, it might have happened to you!"

"Well, it didn't happen to me, Mother," said Geraldine, a little impatiently. "Of course they'll find Gretel; they've got to find her." Geraldine's voice broke in a quickly suppressed sob.

"There you go again," moaned her mother, reproachfully. "I can't say a word without your beginning to cry. I don't care what your father says; I shall insist on giving you a dose of bromide to-night. Your nerves are completely unstrung."

"I'm all right, Mummy," said Geraldine, tremulously; "don't bother about me. I'll fan you, and if you lie still, perhaps you'll fall asleep. I'm sure a nap will do you good."

"I dare say it would," her mother admitted,

"but it seems as if I couldn't sleep. Every time I drop off I have such frightful dreams. I can't get the thought of that poor child out of my mind for a moment. It's so horrible to think that no one knows what has become of her. Sometimes I almost wish I could believe she had run away of her own accord."

"Mother!" cried Geraldine, indignantly. "How can you say such a thing? You know Gretel wouldn't run away. She loved us all dearly; she wouldn't have worried her brother for the world. Oh, Mother, how can you?" Geraldine's voice shook ominously.

"There, there, dear," Mrs. Barlow said, soothingly, "of course I know she didn't. Gretel is a dear child; she always was. I only mean that almost anything would be better than this terrible suspense."

"Mother," said Geraldine, abruptly, "do you suppose any one believes Gretel went away on purpose?"

"My dear child, how should I know? Whom have I seen, shut up here all this week? Not a living soul except your father

and you children. Of course, your father says there has been some talk, which is only natural, under the circumstances. It was unfortunate that Gretel's father should have been a German, but no one who really knew the child could possibly believe a word against her."

Geraldine sprang to her feet.

"I'm going away for a few minutes," she said, hurriedly. "You won't mind, will you, Mummy? I'll be right back."

"Oh, no, I won't mind," her mother answered, languidly. "I think perhaps I might drop off to sleep if I were alone. Go and try to amuse yourself. You were going to do so much knitting for the soldiers, and you haven't taken a stitch in a week."

"Would you mind if I went out for a little while?" Geraldine asked, pausing in the doorway.

"Out in this awful heat! How can you? But if you want to go, I suppose you can. Be sure to keep in the shade, though, and don't stir one step without Eugenie. I shall never

let you go out by yourself again. I suppose you want to go to the Douaines'."

"I should like to if I may, just for a few minutes. They might have heard something this morning."

"Don't deceive yourself with false hopes," her mother advised. "Barbara Douaine will let us know the moment there is any news. But if it comforts you to go there I have no objection. Give my love to Barbara, and tell her I would come myself if I were able to lift my head."

Geraldine hurried away, thankful for any occupation that would keep her moving. The past week had been the saddest of her bright young life, and as the dreadful days dragged on, bringing no relief—no news of the absent Gretel—the girl had grown perceptibly thinner and paler. To-day was the worst day of all, for Jerry, her constant comfort and standby, had gone up the Hudson with his father, who had Government business to transact at West Point. Geraldine herself had been urged to make one of the party, but had

refused so decidedly that her father had deemed it useless to persist. Jerry would have remained at home, too, but that she would not allow.

"Jerry loves Gretel almost as much as I do," she told herself, as she mounted the stairs to her own room, "but boys are different from girls. They've got to have something to do. They can't stand just sitting still and waiting for things to happen. I'm glad Jerry can enjoy himself, but I couldn't have a good time anywhere in the world just now."

Ten minutes later Geraldine, accompanied by Eugenie, the French maid, was hurrying along the sun-baked streets in the direction of the Douaines'. Eugenie, who, of course, knew all about Gretel's disappearance, was both voluble and sympathetic.

"Has Mademoiselle seen the morning paper?" she wanted to know. Geraldine said she had not looked at it.

"There is a picture of Mademoiselle Gretel on the front page," Eugenie informed her.

"Any one would know her; the likeness is perfect."

Geraldine swallowed a lump in her throat, and asked a question.

"What do people think has become of Miss Gretel, Eugenie?"

Eugenie lowered her voice to a mysterious whisper.

"They think the Boche have something to do with it," she said.

"The Boche?" repeated Geraldine. "Oh, you mean the Germans. But Gretel isn't a German, she is an American."

"Her father was a German," said Eugenie, "and it is said she had German friends."

"Who says so?" demanded Geraldine, and she spoke so sharply that the maid looked rather frightened.

"I know nothing," she murmured apologetically, "nothing whatever. My friends know nothing. I only repeat what I read in the papers."

"The papers!" repeated Geraldine, incredu-

lously. "You mean the papers say the Germans took Gretel away?"

"They do not say that exactly, but they think it possible. The young lady was seen talking with a Boche—I mean a German—one day about a week before she was lost. It was in New London. Those Germans will stop at nothing that is wicked."

Geraldine stamped her foot impatiently.

"That little wretch Archie Davenport made up the story," she said, indignantly. "There isn't a word of truth in it. Gretel didn't know any Germans, and if one had spoken to her, she would have told me about it. We always tell each other everything. Oh, wouldn't I like to wring that boy's neck? Jerry gave him a black eye, and made his nose bleed, for saying that same thing, but that wasn't half punishment enough. I suppose he has gone on talking, and now the newspapers have gotten hold of it. Father says they get hold of everything they can. Oh, it's too awful!" Geraldine checked a rising sob, and did not speak again till they reached the Douaines'.

The house was no longer closed, as it had been on the morning of Gretel's return from New London. Many of the blinds and windows were open, and in answer to Geraldine's ring, the door was opened, not by Mrs. Murphy, but by a young woman with red eyes.

"Why, Dora," cried Geraldine in surprise, "I didn't know you were here. When did you come up from Washington?"

"Last night, Miss Geraldine," the girl answered. "Maggie came, too. Mr. Douaine sent for us. They think we may be needed, especially if Miss Gretel should be ill when they find her."

"When they find her," the words made Geraldine's heart leap with sudden hope.

"Have they any news?" she demanded, breathlessly.

Dora shook her head and began to cry.

"Oh, Miss Geraldine, isn't it awful?" she sobbed. "Whatever can have happened to her? It's the most dreadful thing that ever was. It just breaks my heart to look at Mr.

and Mrs. Douaine. If those wicked Germans had anything to do with it, I hope they'll be killed, every one."

"The Germans had nothing to do with it," said Geraldine, impatiently. "Is Mrs. Douaine up-stairs? Do you think I could see her?"

"Yes, Miss, she's in the library, writing letters, and I'm sure she'd be glad to see you. Mr. Douaine is out most of the time, working with the police, and she hardly sees any one. Those newspaper reporters keep calling up on the telephone about every hour, and Mrs. Douaine always answers them so patiently. Do go up and see her, Miss Geraldine. Maybe you can cheer her up a little."

Leaving Eugenie in the hall with Dora, Geraldine hurried up-stairs to the library, where she and Gretel had spent so many pleasant hours together. Mrs. Douaine was writing at her desk, but on the visitor's entrance she laid down her pen, and rose.

"I am so glad you have come, dear," she said, kissing Geraldine. "I thought you

would be here this morning. How is your mother?"

"Just about the same. She says she can't sleep, and her head aches all the time. Oh, dear, dear Mrs. Douaine, isn't there any news yet—not the very slightest clue?"

"I am afraid not yet, dear, but we must try and be patient. The detectives say there is every reason to hope that something may be discovered this week. Come and sit down, and let me have a good cry on your shoulder. I try to keep up before Percy—he has enough to bear himself, poor fellow—but I think it does me good to break down once in a while."

"Oh, you poor dear!" cried Geraldine, throwing her arms round her friend's neck, and they clung to each other in silent grief.

"Mrs. Douaine," said Geraldine, abruptly, when they were both calmer, and were sitting together on the sofa, "did you see Gretel's picture in the *Times* this morning?"

"No, dear, but Percy told me about it."

"Eugenie told me," said Geraldine, "and she says—she says there is something else, too.

Some people think Gretel may have run away on purpose. You don't believe any such nonsense, do you?"

"Certainly not," Gretel's sister-in-law answered, with so much decision that Geraldine's face brightened perceptibly.

"I knew you didn't," she said in a tone of relief, "but it's ever so comforting to hear you say it."

"It is all a great mystery," said Mrs. Douaine, sadly, "but of one thing Percy and I are absolutely certain, and that is that Gretel was not to blame in any way. She is as true as steel, and devoted to us all. Something terrible must have happened, but it was through no fault of hers."

"Then you don't believe that silly story about talking with a strange man in the street?"

"I think there was probably some mistake. The man may merely have stopped to ask Gretel a question. I am sorry such a story should have been started, for, of course, people will talk. There is such a strong feeling

against all Germans just now, and poor Gretel's German name tells against her, but I am sure that none of the child's friends will ever believe anything wrong about her. I have had several such dear letters from the schoolgirls. I was just answering a beautiful one from Miss Minton herself. We had no idea what a favorite Gretel was; she was so gentle and modest, and never put herself forward in any way. I have kept all the letters, thinking you might like to read them."

"I should love to," said Geraldine, "but—but, Mrs. Douaine, there is something that I think perhaps I ought to tell you first. I am afraid something did happen to Gretel one afternoon in New London."

Mrs. Douaine looked very much startled.

"Why do you think so?" she asked. "Oh, Geraldine, you haven't been keeping anything back that might have helped us, have you, dear?"

Geraldine hid her face on her friend's shoulder.

"I don't think it could have helped," she

whispered. "I had forgotten all about it till this morning, when Eugenie told me what was in the paper. It was one day when Gretel went shopping with Mrs. Chester. I was in our room when she came home, and she seemed rather queer and excited. She cried about the war, and kept saying how terrible it was, and that night I heard her crying, too. I thought some one had hurt her feelings by saying something about her being German. But she wouldn't tell me when I asked her, and I was a little provoked because we always tell each other everything. She seemed all right again the next day, but I spoke to Jerry about it and he thought, as I did, that some one had been rude or unkind. Afterwards we both forgot about it, and I don't suppose I should ever have remembered it again if it hadn't been for that horrid story. There was a horrid little boy—a cousin of Ada Godfrey's—who said something about Gretel having run off with the Germans, but nobody paid any attention to him, and Jerry punched his head for telling such stories. You don't suppose it could have

been a German she met that day, and that he could have carried her off and shut her up somewhere, do you?"

Mrs. Douaine hesitated.

"I scarcely think it likely," she said. "What possible object could any German have in doing such a thing? I will tell Percy when he comes in, though, and he will do what he thinks best about informing the police. We must not keep anything back that may prove a possible clue. Of course, it is possible that Gretel might have met some old German friend of her father's, and not mentioned the fact to any one, but I don't for a moment believe it had the slightest connection with what has happened."

"I suppose we shall have to tell everything," sighed Geraldine, "but I can't bear to have people saying and thinking horrid things about Gretel."

"My dear," said Mrs. Douaine, gently, "when we know a thing to be untrue ourselves, why should we mind what foolish people may say? We know positively that Gretel

did not go away on purpose, that whatever happened was through no fault of hers, so let us try to forget all the unkind things people may say, and just keep on hoping and praying all the time. What is it, Dora?"

"A lady to see you, ma'am," announced Dora in the doorway. "I told her you couldn't see anybody, but she seems awful upset and says she must see either you or Mr. Douaine. I think"—lowering her voice—"I think she's German."

"Show her up," said Mrs. Douaine, with sudden eagerness. "It may be a clue," she added to Geraldine, as Dora left the room.

There was a moment of silence; then the sound of approaching footsteps.

"I'll go and meet her," Mrs. Douaine said, rising, but before she could reach the door, the visitor was already on the threshold.

"Fräulein!" cried Geraldine, springing to her feet, "why, it's Fräulein." And she hurried forward, both hands outstretched.

Fräulein it was, but a Fräulein so changed —so pale and agitated that it really was sur-

prising that Geraldine should recognize her in that first moment.

But the German woman scarcely noticed her old pupil. Pushing past Geraldine, she rushed to Mrs. Douaine, and, to that lady's utter astonishment, suddenly dropped on her knees.

"Oh, I have heard!" she cried, "I have heard the terrible news! I knew nothing until this morning. I never read your American newspapers now, but this morning the family where I am living were talking at the breakfast table, and I caught the name. I nearly fainted, and afterwards I read what was in the paper. Oh, it is too horrible—too horrible!" And Fräulein began to sob hysterically.

"I came as fast as I could," she gasped; "I took the very first train. I am living in New Jersey, and it took some time, but I did not lose a moment."

"I am sure you did not," said Mrs. Douaine, kindly. "I know how fond you and Gretel were of each other. We have been trying to find you, but we did not know your address.

I hoped you would come when you heard. Oh, do try to control yourself a little. I am afraid you will be ill. Geraldine dear, bring Fräulein a glass of water."

"German sentimentality," muttered Geraldine to herself, as she hurried away to the pantry. "I don't believe she cares half as much as the rest of us do, and yet by the way she goes on, one might think she was Gretel's own mother."

Fräulein sipped the water, and was induced to rise from her knees, but she still continued to sob, and clung convulsively to Mrs. Douaine's hand.

"I am not to blame, indeed I am not!" she declared between sobs. "It is not my fault that this frightful thing has happened. It is not my fault!"

"Of course it is not your fault," Mrs. Douaine assured her. "No one has ever thought for a moment of blaming you in any way. The only reason we have been trying to find you was that we thought it just possible that you might have communicated with Gretel that

day, and that she might have been on her way to see you when—when it happened."

Fräulein shook her head.

"I had nothing to do with it," she said. "I was not here. I have been governess to a family in New Jersey for the past month. She was coming one day, before she went to New London, but she forgot. She wrote to apologize to me for forgetting, and I thanked God on my knees that she had not come."

Geraldine gave a little gasp of astonishment, and the color faded from Mrs. Douaine's face.

"Why were you glad she had not come?" Gretel's sister-in-law asked, sharply. "Why were you so thankful?"

Fräulein did not answer; she only moaned, and wrung her hands dramatically.

"I loved the child," she wailed; "you may not believe me, but it is true, I loved her dearly. I could not bear that any harm should come to her through my fault."

"And why did you fear that harm might have come to the girl through your fault?"

It was not Mrs. Douaine who asked the ques-

tion. In their excitement, none of them had heard approaching footsteps, and now Mrs. Douaine and Geraldine turned with a start, and discovered Gretel's brother and another man standing in the doorway. It was Mr. Douaine's companion who had spoken. He was a quietly dressed man, with a strong, clever face, and Geraldine noticed with surprise that he spoke with a slightly foreign accent. As for Fräulein, at sight of the two gentlemen, she uttered a little frightened scream, and collapsed in a heap on the sofa.

The stranger waited a moment, and then repeated his question.

"And why did you fear that harm might come to the girl through your fault?"

"Who—who is he?" inquired Fräulein, in a tremulous whisper.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Douaine. "The other gentleman is my husband. This is Gretel's friend, Percy, Fräulein Sieling; you remember her."

She glanced anxiously at her husband, but Mr. Douaine did not seem to notice either the

words or the glance. His eyes were fixed steadily on his companion's face.

"Do you know this lady, Mr. Douaine?" the stranger asked.

"I have only met her once, but my sister knew her well. She was the German teacher at the girls' school in Connecticut, which Gretel has been attending for the past two winters."

"Ah, I see. Well, Fräulein, perhaps you have something to tell us, which may be of service to us in this sad business?"

"No, indeed, indeed I have not!" cried Fräulein, with a fresh burst of tears. "I would give all I have in the world to be able to help you, for the child is as dear to me as if she were my own sister. But my uncle, he is a great patriot. He asked me to do something to help my dear country, and there was so little I could do. I knew how dear Gretel had adored her father, and I thought—I thought, perhaps for his sake, and for the sake of the Fatherland, that she might—she might ——" Choking sobs finished the sentence.

"You mean you thought my sister might be of service to your uncle?" Mr. Douaine asked sternly.

Fräulein nodded.

"He only asked me to give him the opportunity of speaking to her," she moaned. "I—I asked her to come that afternoon, but she did not come, and my heart was full of thankfulness. I never dreamed of harm coming to her until this morning, when I heard that terrible news."

Mr. Douaine and his companion exchanged glances.

"Then," said the stranger, quietly, "you mean us to understand that you know nothing of what has happened since Miss Gretel went to New London?"

"Nothing, nothing whatever," declared Fräulein, and there was a ring of sincerity in her tone that they could not doubt. "I would give my life to find her."

"In that case," said the man in the same quiet voice, "you will certainly have no objection to answering any questions we may ask.

In the first place, will you please give us your uncle's name and address? "

Fräulein started violently and covered her face with her hands.

" I cannot do that," she protested, trembling. " My uncle is a German patriot. It might not be safe for him if his address were known. Besides, he has nothing to do with the child's disappearance—I am sure he has not."

" If he has not, he will have nothing to fear from his address being known to us," the stranger said, reassuringly. " You say you love this poor girl. Is it possible that you will refuse to do all in your power to help us to find her? "

" I have said that I would give my life to find her," affirmed Fräulein, indignantly, and she lifted her tear-swollen face from her hands.

" We are not asking for your life; we are only asking for your uncle's name and address. He may have no more to do with the affair than you have, but in this terrible business we must leave no stone unturned. Come, Fräulein,

you are a good woman, I am sure, and want to help us all you can. If your uncle is innocent, there can be no objection to our interviewing him."

For a moment longer the woman continued to struggle against her better nature. Then she said slowly:

"He is not my own uncle; he is only the husband of my aunt. Yes, I will tell you his name. It is Rudolph Becker, and he lives ——" she murmured an address.

"Rudolph Becker," repeated the stranger, and although his voice was still quiet, there was a note of suppressed excitement in it, which caused Mrs. Douaine's heart to leap with sudden hope. "Thank you, Fräulein, that is all I shall require of you." And without another word, he turned and left the room, followed by Gretel's brother.

"What have I done?—Oh, what have I done?" wailed Fräulein, wringing her hands, and rocking herself back and forward in her distress. "My uncle had nothing to do with Gretel's disappearance, I would swear he had

not, but there are other things—he is a patriot."

"You have done nothing wrong, my dear," said Mrs. Douaine, gently, "and you may have done good. If anything you have said proves a help in finding our dear little girl, we shall love you, and be grateful to you all our lives."

CHAPTER XIV

FOUND

How long she had lived in that dark, stifling little room and slept on that hard mattress on the floor, Gretel had no idea. Was it days, months or years? Sometimes she felt as if it must be years, but she had ceased to count time. She had almost ceased wondering whether she was ever going to be set free. At first she had lived in constant terror, but as time dragged on, and nothing happened, and as the close air and confinement began to tell more and more upon her, she had sunk into a kind of dull stupor, which made her indifferent to most things. Sometimes she would wake up with a sudden feeling of terror, and then for a little while she would be very miserable, thinking of Percy and Barbara, and how they must be suffering on her account, but as she grew physically weaker, even the thought of home

and friends grew less painful, and she lay most of the time with closed eyes, thinking of nothing in particular, and only longing for a breath of fresh air, or a drink of cold water.

Several times each day Mrs. Becker appeared with food, from which she generally turned with loathing, but she was always glad of a drink of milk, and would occasionally take a few spoonfuls of soup. Mrs. Becker always looked worried, and as if she had been crying, but she never talked much, and was always careful to lock the door again when she went away. Sometimes Mr. Becker came and looked at her, but he never spoke. Once she had ventured to glance at his face, but its expression had frightened her so much that for hours afterwards she had shivered and moaned, in a renewal of all the old terrors of the beginning of her imprisonment.

Would they keep her there until she died? That was the one thought which occasionally pierced through her half-benumbed faculties. She was so weak and her head ached so, she did not think she would mind dying very much.

Perhaps God would let her go to her father, and they would be happy again, as they used to be in the old studio days. How happy those days were, when Mrs. Lippheim and Fritz came to tea, and she was allowed to make the toast. But that was so long ago, and now Fritz was—was—her confused thoughts would wander off into a feverish dream, in which she and Stephen Cranston seemed to be dancing together, only mingled with the gay dance music she could always hear Ada Godfrey's voice talking about loyalty to one's country.

She had been dreaming a queer, confused dream, all about Ada and Stephen and Fritz Lippheim, when she was roused by the sound of Mrs. Becker's voice, and opened her eyes to find the woman standing beside her with a cup of soup in her hand.

"You must take this," Mrs. Becker said, in a tone of unusual decision. "My husband says you are to take it. He will be angry if you refuse."

Gretel turned her face to the wall.

"I am not hungry," she said, impatiently. "Please go away. I want to go to sleep again."

"But you must not sleep all the time," Mrs. Becker protested. "You must get up after you have taken the soup. Rudolph wants to talk to you."

Gretel lifted her head with more animation than she had shown in days.

"Is he going to let me go home?" she demanded eagerly.

Mrs. Becker shook her head.

"You know he cannot do that," she said, crossly. "Your friends would ask questions, and you would tell them things that must not be told. It is very hard for Rudolph; he had no wish to keep you here. You should have obeyed him and he would have let you go at once. Rudolph is not a wicked man. He is so worried that he cannot sleep at night. You have brought awful trouble upon us."

"It wasn't my fault," said Gretel, wearily, pressing her hot hand to her aching forehead. "I couldn't swear not to tell. It would have

been disloyal to my country. I am an American."

"You are a fool, that is what you are!" burst out Mrs. Becker angrily. "We are all in terrible trouble. If you are found here what will be done to us? And yet how can we let you go? You are to blame for everything, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Gretel said nothing. There did not seem to be any use in talking, and she felt so very tired and confused. She only wanted to be left alone. But Mrs. Becker's next words aroused her completely.

"Besides, what good have you done by being so obstinate? You might as well have obeyed Rudolph, since your friends think you have run away on purpose."

"My friends think I have run away on purpose?" repeated Gretel, incredulously. "But they don't; they couldn't think such a thing."

"Very well, come and look at the paper Rudolph has to show you. But first you must drink this good soup. I have taken great trouble in making it for you."

Gretel took the cup and hastily swallowed a portion of the contents. She was trembling with weakness and excitement, but she suddenly felt wide awake.

"I can't swallow any more," she said, setting the half-emptied cup on the floor. "May I go to your husband now?"

"Yes, he is waiting for you in the sitting-room."

Gretel rose feebly. She was so weak that she almost fell against the wall, and was forced to clutch Mrs. Becker's arm for support. The woman looked a little frightened.

"That comes because you will not eat," she said, reproachfully. "I have told you that it is necessary to eat." But she put her arm round the trembling girl not unkindly and led her along the narrow hall to the room where she had taken coffee with the Beckers on that afternoon, which seemed such ages ago.

It was the first time that Gretel had been allowed to leave her prison, and the sudden change from the dark little trunk-room to the sunlit parlor made her so giddy that she in-

stinctively closed her eyes and leaned more heavily on Mrs. Becker's arm.

"She is going to faint," she heard a voice say, which sounded as if it came from somewhere a long way off, and then she found herself lying on the sofa with Mrs. Becker bathing her forehead, and Mr. Becker looking down at her, with stern, angry eyes.

"Do you feel better?" Mrs. Becker inquired anxiously.

"I—I think so," faltered Gretel, sitting up, and pushing the wet hair out of her eyes. She was dimly conscious of being very untidy and dishevelled. She had never undressed since that day, ages ago, when she left New London; neither had her hair been combed or brushed.

"She needs more air," Mrs. Becker said to her husband in German. "The air in there is stifling."

"I know it," returned her husband, "but it cannot be helped." Then, turning to Gretel, he added:

"Did my wife tell you why I wished to see you?"

Gretel shook her head.

"It was because I thought you might enjoy reading the morning paper," said the man, with a disagreeable laugh. "There is something in it that I am sure will interest you."

Gretel was silent. The better air was beginning to revive her a little, but she still felt very dizzy and confused. Mr. Becker picked up a newspaper from the table, and held it out to her.

"You can find it easily," he said. "What I want you to read is on the front page."

Gretel took the paper and sat gazing blankly at it. She could make nothing of the letters that danced before her eyes.

"Shall I read it to you?" Mr. Becker asked, and without waiting for a reply, he began reading in the same sneering, disagreeable voice.

"It is now generally believed that Gretel Schiller, the fifteen-year-old girl, whose mysterious disappearance on July fifth has caused such widespread interest and excitement, left

her home voluntarily to join some German friend or friends. She is known to have been seen in earnest conversation with a man, supposed to have been a German, in New London, about ten days previous to her disappearance. The girl was at that time visiting in New London, and her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Chester, well known in this city, admit that she never mentioned this clandestine meeting, although Mrs. Chester was in the town at the same time, and they had only separated for a few minutes. This evidence is likely to throw an entirely new light upon the affair, and it is said that Miss Schiller's own family are now inclined to believe that her disappearance was a voluntary act."

Mr. Becker paused. Gretel was staring at the paper with wild, horrified eyes.

"It isn't true," she gasped. "I don't believe it. Percy and Barbara would never think such a thing."

"Read for yourself," said Mr. Becker, pushing the paper towards her. But Gretel did not read. She only covered her face with her

hands and burst into an agony of tears. They were the first she had shed in days.

"It can't be true, oh, it can't be true!" moaned the poor child. "They know I wouldn't; everybody knows it."

"You are a German," said Mr. Becker, coldly. "People will believe anything against a German in these days. Is it true that you talked to a man in the street, and did not mention the fact to your friends?"

"It was only for a moment with Fritz Lippheim," sobbed Gretel. "He was one of Father's oldest friends and he was so good to me when I was a little girl."

"Fritz Lippheim," repeated Mr. Becker, in a startled tone. "You mean Lippheim the violinist?"

"Yes," said Gretel. "He and his mother were great friends of ours, but I hadn't seen him in years till that day in New London. He asked me not to mention having met him, and I didn't like to refuse. It made me uncomfortable afterwards, but I never dreamed——"

Mr. Becker started to his feet, and began

rapidly pacing the floor. It was evident that something had put him out very much.

"I saw that fellow Lippheim in New London myself," he muttered. "He was at that dance where I—I never thought of it at the time, but I believe he was up to some mischief. Gertrude, take that girl back where she belongs, and lock her in. Her snivelling makes me nervous."

"But Rudolph," ventured Mrs. Becker, timidly, "the air in there is so bad. Let the child stay here for a little while. There can be no harm."

"Do as I tell you," shouted her husband. "All my nerves are on edge. I cannot stand anything more."

Mrs. Becker laid a trembling hand on Gretel's arm.

"Come," she whispered. "Don't you see you are making him angry?"

With an effort, Gretel dragged herself to her feet, and allowed Mrs. Becker to lead her back to her prison. Twice she stumbled and almost fell, but the woman's strong arm supported

her until she reached the little dark room, where she dropped on her hard mattress on the floor. In another moment the door was again shut and locked, and she heard Mrs. Becker's retreating footsteps. She wondered vaguely why the woman was crying. It was not possible Mrs. Becker really cared, and was sorry for her. Nobody cared any more—not even her own family.

With a sharp cry, Gretel started up. They must not think dreadful things about her. They must learn the truth. It was only a wicked newspaper story, of course, but how had people learned of her meeting with Fritz? Some one she knew must have seen them talking together, but she could not remember meeting any one that afternoon until she rejoined Mrs. Chester, and then there was Jimmy Fairfax. Could Jimmy have seen her talking with Fritz? Fritz certainly did look like a German, but if Jimmy had seen them together, why had he not questioned her about it? Oh, she could not die there in that dreadful place, and let people go on thinking she had

run away. They would always believe it; not Percy and Barbara, perhaps, or even the Barlows, her oldest friends, but other people—Miss Minton, and the girls at school, and Mrs. Cranston and Stephen. It was Stephen who had vouched for her loyalty the day they went to visit the submarine base. She must get away somehow, and let them know she had not done that dreadful thing. She sprang to her feet, and beat against the door, with a wild, desperate hope of making some one hear. But the only sound she heard was Mr. Becker's heavy tread coming down the hall. Outside her door the footsteps paused.

"Stop that noise this instant," the stern voice commanded.

"Let me out," shrieked Gretel, almost beside herself with terror and despair. "Let me out. I must—I must ——" Suddenly her strength failed her, and with a choking cry, she sank back in a little heap on the dusty floor.

Mrs. Becker was sitting in the rocking-chair, crying softly, when her husband re-

turned to the sitting-room. He did not speak at once, but stood looking down at her, his face very dark and stern. Mrs. Becker herself was the first to break silence.

"What are we to do, Rudolph?" she questioned timidly. "The child eats nothing; she cannot go on like this. She will die, and then what will happen to us?"

"Confound the girl!" burst forth the man furiously—both he and his wife spoke in German—"Confound the whole business! I could kill that niece of yours, with her idiotic talk about the girl's love for Germany. Now listen to me, and don't let me hear any snivelling, either. Pay attention to every word I say, and mind you do exactly as I tell you."

"Yes, Rudolph," murmured Mrs. Becker, obediently.

"I am going away, going away on important business. I want to get off as soon as possible, so go and pack my valise."

"But, Rudolph, you will not leave me here alone with her? Oh, surely you will not do

that! Let me go with you; I will carry the valise. I will not be any trouble."

"Nonsense! you don't know what you are talking about. I am sorry to leave you, but it cannot be helped. This is war time, and I am working for my country. You are to do as I say, and if you disobey my orders you will live to regret it. You are not to let the girl out after I am gone, do you understand? You are to let her suppose I am still here. When I have been away two days, you may do as you please. I don't care what happens then. I shall have accomplished what I have to do, and I can take care of myself after that. The girl may say what she chooses."

"But what will become of me, Rudolph?" cried Mrs. Becker, piteously. "They will hold me responsible—they ——"

"Now, see here, Gertrude," interrupted her husband in a somewhat milder tone, "I am sorry, very sorry, but, as I said before, it cannot be helped. I am working for a great cause. I cannot have all my work ruined by a silly child.

"After all, it was your own niece who caused all the trouble. It is only just that you should suffer something for being the aunt of such an idiot. I would not leave you if it were not absolutely necessary for me to get away just now. Something that girl said has made me uneasy. That man Lippheim that she mentioned; we have been suspicious of him for some time. I saw him myself in New London, swaggering about at that dance I told you of. I had no idea he knew the Schiller girl. If he should track her here—ha! what's that?"

"It's the bell, Rudolph," said Mrs. Becker, wiping her eyes.

Mr. Becker—who had given a violent start, and turned rather pale—pulled himself together with an effort.

"Go to the door," he said. "If it's any one to see me, say I'm out. Don't let any one in, on any account."

Mr. Becker's tone was firm, but the color did not return to his face, and while his wife went to obey his commands, he glanced about the room nervously, as if for some means of

escape, should occasion require it. There was a moment of silence, while the door was being opened, then a suppressed scream from Mrs. Becker, followed by approaching footsteps, and two men walked quietly into the room.

"You are Rudolph Becker, I believe," remarked the foremost of the two strangers, and he glanced keenly about the room as he spoke.

"That is my name, certainly. To what do I owe the honor of this visit, Mr.—Mr. Lippheim, is it not?"

The visitor nodded.

"Quite correct," he said. "Fritz Lippheim is my name. I suppose you are aware of the fact that, for several months, you have been under suspicion of being in the pay of the German Government?"

Mr. Becker changed color, but his voice, though less steady than usual, was still calm.

"I believe you are a German yourself," he said, quietly.

"I was born in Germany," the other answered, without the slightest hesitation, "but my family moved to this country when I was

six years old. I am an American citizen, and for the past few months I have been a member of the United States Secret Service. I and my colleagues have been watching you since this country entered the war. We lost track of you for a few days after you left New London, but I was fortunate in learning your address this morning. Now, Becker, there is no use in making a row. Your game is up. There are two policemen waiting for you on the stairs, and as this is the third floor, you have no chance of escaping by the window."

Whatever Rudolph Becker was, he was no coward. He drew himself up and folded his arms.

"What I have done was for my country," he said. "I am not ashamed. If I am a spy, so are you, only with a difference. I have been working for Germany, and you—a German born—are in the service of her enemies."

Fritz Lippheim shrugged his shoulders, and turned to his companion.

"Will you tell those men they may come in, Mr. Douaine?" he said.

Mr. Douaine left the room for a moment, and when he returned he was accompanied by two stout policemen. Mrs. Becker was nowhere to be seen. At the first sign of danger, she had fled to her room, and locked herself in.

"Arrest this man," commanded the secret service agent. The policemen obeyed. Mr. Becker offered no resistance, but stood quietly while the handcuffs were fastened on. He was evidently resigned to the inevitable.

"The next thing is to make a thorough search of the apartment," said Fritz Lippheim.

For the first time the prisoner showed signs of embarrassment.

"I beg that you will not consider that necessary," he said. "I have surrendered without a struggle. I am prepared to give up all the papers in my possession."

"Search the apartment," ordered Fritz, and began opening table-drawers, while Mr. Douaine and one of the policemen left the room together.

There was a moment of tense silence while Fritz emptied several drawers, and ran his

eye hastily over the contents. Then the policeman returned.

"The door of one of the bedrooms is locked, sir," he announced. "There is a woman in there; we can hear her crying."

"Order her to come out," said Fritz, imperturbably. "If she refuses, break in the door."

"It is my wife," protested Becker, "my poor, delicate wife. Surely, gentlemen, you will respect her feelings. I will go away quietly with you, but do not disturb my wife."

But the police officer had already left the room, and in another moment he could be heard knocking at Mrs. Becker's door.

"I say, ma'am, unlock that door, will you? We've got to get in there. We don't want to use violence, but it may be necessary if you don't obey the orders of the police."

There was the sound of a door being flung violently open, and Mrs. Becker, pale and wild-eyed, rushed into the sitting-room and flung herself on her knees at Fritz Lippheim's feet.

"Oh, spare me, spare me!" she implored. "It isn't my fault. I haven't done anything, indeed I haven't. I begged my husband to let the child go, I implored him to do it, but he said it was for the cause, and ——"

"Hold your tongue, Gertrude," shouted Mr. Becker. "No one is going to hurt you. They can all see you are too big a fool to do any harm."

Mrs. Becker relapsed into low, frightened sobbing. Fritz Lippheim, whose face had suddenly brightened, turned eagerly to the policemen.

"Search every corner of this apartment," he said. "Break open any door you find locked."

With a long sigh Gretel opened her eyes. Some one was bending over her, holding strong smelling-salts to her nose, and some one else was trying to force something between her lips. She felt utterly bewildered, and for the first moment had no idea where she was, or what had happened. But as she gazed up into

the two anxious faces, remembrance came back with a rush.

"Percy," she whispered, "is it really you? And—why, it's Fritz Lippheim, too. Oh, Percy dear, have you come to take me home?"

"Yes, dear," her brother answered gently. "Don't try to talk. Just swallow this; it will make you feel better. You are quite safe, and Mr. Lippheim and I have come to take you home to Barbara."

Gretel swallowed the contents of the spoon Percy was holding to her lips, and though it made her cough and choke, it seemed to revive her, and when she spoke next, her voice was stronger.

"I'm loyal. I'm an American. I didn't run away on purpose. Oh, Percy, you don't believe it, even if the paper did say that dreadful thing?"

"Of course, I don't believe it, dear. You have been a brave loyal little American. We know everything, and I am prouder of you than if you had won the *croix de guerre*. But you mustn't talk any more just now. You are

not very strong, you know. Lie still till you feel a little better, and then we will go home."

Gretel gave a great gasp of joy and relief, and then her eyes closed, and she slipped away again into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XV

SAFE AT HOME

It was very pleasant in the Douaines' garden that lovely September afternoon, and so Gretel thought, as she lay back in her steamer-chair, under the big apple-tree, and gazed out across the wide stretch of lawn to the broad Potomac, sparkling in the afternoon sunshine. She had been reading, but her book had fallen unheeded into her lap, and her thoughts were busy with many things. She was a very pale, fragile-looking Gretel, a mere shadow of the rosy-cheeked girl who had waved good-bye to her friends at the New London station, a little more than two months earlier. The long nervous illness, which had followed that terrible week of imprisonment, had told cruelly upon her strength. All that love and care could do had been done, but for days the poor child had lain in an only half-conscious condition, varied by fits of hysteria, very painful to witness.

As soon as she was able to be moved, the Douaines had taken her to a quiet little place on the Jersey shore, and there she and Barbara had remained for weeks, while Mr. Douaine made flying trips between Washington and the cottage by the sea. As Gretel's strength returned her nerves grew calmer, and those weeks by the sea had been very restful and pleasant. It was only a week since they had returned to Washington, and Gretel, although improving a little each day, was still far from strong, and found lying in a steamer-chair under the trees more agreeable than any more active occupation. The very thought of tennis or long walks made her head ache, but she was very happy, and as she lay there, gazing out over the wide river, she smiled contentedly to herself. For had not Barbara gone to the station to meet Jerry and Geraldine, who were coming for their long promised visit to Washington?

It was all so quiet and peaceful; it seemed impossible to realize that only a few miles away the fate of nations was being discussed,

and that in France guns were booming, and men dying by thousands every day. The American boys were fighting for their country, and to save civilization, and at that moment Gretel's heart swelled with pride. She knew now, more than ever before in her life, what it meant to love one's country.

Her reflections were interrupted by the sight of her brother, in his white flannels, strolling across the lawn in her direction. She knew that Percy was taking a much-needed holiday from the war office, and had been playing golf all the afternoon.

"Feeling pretty fit to-day, little girl?" Mr. Douaine asked, kindly, as he threw himself into the empty chair by Gretel's side.

"Oh, yes," his sister assured him, cheerfully. "I am ever so much stronger. I am sure I shall be able to go back to school the first of October."

Mr. Douaine smiled and shook his head.

"No school till after Christmas," he said, decidedly. "Don't you think you can manage to be happy with us till then?"

"I am always happy with you and Barbara," Gretel answered, "but I shall hate to get behind with my lessons. Don't you really think I shall be well enough to go back next month?"

"I am afraid not, dear. The doctors say you must have a good long rest before you begin to study again. You have had a terrible strain, you know, and people don't get over such things in a week. You may begin practising before long, but that is really all we can allow."

Gretel sighed resignedly. After all, there was something rather pleasant in the thought of just drifting along like this, day after day, and being taken care of by the people she loved best in the world.

"I am afraid I shall be dreadfully spoiled if I stay here much longer," she said. "Every one is so kind to me. Did you see those lovely roses that nice Mrs. Allen sent? And that dear old lady in the house across the way has sent some delicious hothouse grapes. Then I keep getting such wonderful letters from all

my friends. I wonder what makes people so kind."

"There are a good many kind people in the world," her brother said, smiling, "and then you must remember that you are quite the heroine of the hour. You and Fritz Lippheim are sharing the honors of having unearthed that gang of spies."

Gretel laughed.

"I really don't see what I had to do with it," she said. "It was all Fritz. You can't think, Percy, how happy it makes me to know there at least is one German who is working for the United States. I feel quite sure that if Father were alive he would be on our side, too, and so does Fritz. He told me so the other day."

"Fritz is a splendid fellow," Mr. Douaine said heartily; "I only wish we had more like him. I met him this afternoon, by the way, and he has promised to come to dinner to-morrow, and bring his violin."

Gretel's face was radiant.

"I love to hear Fritz play," she said. "It

always makes me think of Father, and the old days in the studio. If I shut my eyes I can almost see it all as it used to be."

"You are a loyal little soul, Gretel," her brother said, giving her hand an affectionate pat. "You never forget the old friends or the old times. But hark! isn't that the motor? I shouldn't be surprised if the twins had arrived."

The twins had arrived, and in a very few minutes Gretel and Geraldine were hugging each other rapturously, while Jerry stood by, grinning with satisfaction, but boylike, quite unable to express his feelings as his more excitable twin was expressing hers.

Of course the two girls had a great deal to say to each other, for, except for a passing glimpse on the day Gretel was brought home, they had not met since their parting at the New London station.

"It's the grandest thing in the world to be together again," declared Geraldine. "I was never quite so happy in my life as when Mrs. Douaine's letter came, saying you were well

OF COURSE THE TWO GIRLS HAD A GREAT DEAL TO SAY TO EACH OTHER.—*Page 314.*

enough to have us. And isn't Washington wonderful? We saw such interesting things coming from the station. I'm so glad you are in the country, though; it's so much nicer than being in that hot, crowded city. It's lovely here, and that view of the river is just perfect. Mrs. Douaine says we can go to Mount Vernon some day, and see the house where George Washington lived. You are looking ever so much better than I expected, Gretel."

"I am almost well," said Gretel. "You are looking wonderfully well, too, and so is Jerry. Camp life must have agreed with you both."

"It was great!" Jerry affirmed. "I say, Gretel, did Geraldine write you about that six-pound trout she caught? I wish you could have seen her hauling it in. She's a real sport, and no mistake."

Mr. and Mrs. Douaine went indoors, leaving the young people to themselves.

"We will have tea out here in half an hour," Mrs. Douaine said, "and in the meantime I know you have a great deal to say to each other."

"Your sister-in-law always does just the right thing," remarked Geraldine, admiringly, as their host and hostess walked away to the house. "She's lovely, and so is your brother, but it's ever so much pleasanter not to have grown-ups about, listening to everything we say. Oh, I am so glad to see you looking more like yourself, Gretel dear. I never shall forget how you looked that day you came home, and Mr. Douaine carried you up-stairs. I thought you were dead at first, but Mr. Lippheim said you had only fainted, and then you opened your eyes, and smiled at us, and it was such a relief. Do you remember it all?"

"Not very well," said Gretel. "I only remember seeing Barbara's face, and being so thankful to be at home, but it's all rather vague and confused. It was days before I really began to understand all that had happened."

"I wish I could see that Lippheim chap," said Jerry. "I've always wanted to talk to a Secret Service man."

"You will have your wish soon, then," said

Gretel, "for Fritz is coming to dinner to-morrow. He often brings his violin, and he and Barbara play duets together. He's doing splendid work, Percy says, but of course it's all secret, and he never mentions it."

"Of course not," said Jerry. "Oh, I say, I think it's a shame I'm only fourteen. I'd give my head to be in the thick of it all."

Gretel and Geraldine looked rather grave, and Gretel said gently:

"It isn't all just excitement and adventure, Jerry. Peter Grubb has been wounded. He has lost his left arm. His family only heard it this week, and poor Dora is so upset."

A shadow crossed Jerry's bright face.

"Poor chap," he said, regretfully; "it's pretty tough to lose an arm, but to lose a leg would be worse. Anyhow, he's fought for his country, and that's something."

"Yes, it is something," Gretel agreed, "and Peter is such a clever boy I am sure he will get on. But it is all very sad. I wish this dreadful war would end."

"Not till Germany is thoroughly licked,"

protested Jerry. "We can't stop fighting till then, even if it takes ten years."

"Jerry," said Gretel, abruptly, "there's something I want to know, but nobody will talk to me about it. What has become of the Beckers?"

The twins exchanged glances, and Geraldine shook her head warningly at her brother.

"I don't believe you'd better ask, Gretel dear," she said. "If your family wanted you to know I guess they would tell you."

But Gretel was not to be put off. She was only fifteen, and had a fair amount of curiosity.

"I think I have a right to know," she said a little impatiently. "After spending a whole week in that dreadful place, I don't see why I shouldn't be told what happened afterwards."

"We don't know ourselves exactly what did happen," Jerry admitted. "You see, that man Becker was a German spy. He was arrested, and—well, they never tell what happens to spies in war time; they just disappear."

Gretel shuddered, and hid her face for a moment on Geraldine's shoulder.

"You don't mean they—oh, it's too horrible! He was a dreadful man, of course, but I don't like to think—oh, I don't like to think ——" and Gretel, who was still far from strong, burst into tears.

Geraldine's arms were round her in a moment.

"You ought not to have said it, Jerry," she said, reproachfully; "Mr. and Mrs. Douaine will be very angry. There, there, Gretel darling, don't cry. We really don't know anything; perhaps they only put him in prison. Anyhow, Mrs. Becker and Fräulein are all right. You know it was Fräulein who gave Mr. Lippheim the Beckers' address. Everybody was grateful to her, and Mr. Douaine gave her the money to take her aunt out to Milwaukee, where they have some relatives, who are quite well off, and will take care of them. I saw poor old Fräulein the day before they went, and she did look dreadfully. She was so worried about you, and

so ashamed of what had happened. I don't believe she will ever brag about the Fatherland again."

"Poor Fräulein," sighed Gretel, drying her eyes. "It was all very terrible for her, and she was always kind to me at school. I hope Percy has her address, for I should like to write to her, and tell her I understand. She never meant to do wrong."

"I had a letter from Molly Chester yesterday," said Geraldine, anxious to change the subject. "She knew Jerry and I were coming to Washington, and sent lots of love to you. She says Stephen Cranston is somewhere on a submarine chaser, but of course they don't know where, because no one is allowed to tell. Jimmy Fairfax has left, too, and they think he is on his way overseas. Molly says Mrs. Godfrey and Ada are coming to Washington for a few days, so we may see them. It seems that Davenport boy is still with them, but he has behaved much better lately, and he and Paul get on quite well together."

"I had a lovely letter from Mrs. Cranston,"

said Gretel. "It was just as bright and cheerful as could be, but I know how hard it must have been for her to let Stephen go. I've had wonderful letters from everybody, but Barbara won't let me answer many of them yet. She says I am not strong enough. I've kept some of the letters to show you, Geraldine. Miss Minton's was the biggest surprise of all; it made me cry, it was so kind. I had no idea she liked me so much. Miss Laura wrote, too, and all the teachers."

"Of course they did," said Jerry. "You are a heroine, you know. People always write to heroines."

"I'm not a heroine at all," protested Gretel, blushing. "I didn't do anything more than any one else would have done under the circumstances. There really wasn't anything else to do. I had to be loyal to my country; we all do."

"The thing that beats me," remarked Jerry, reflectively, "is the way you used to call yourself a coward."

"Well, and so I am," said Gretel innocently.

"I am a terrible coward, and the worst of it is, I am afraid I always shall be."

Jerry burst into a peal of derisive laughter, and Geraldine gave her friend an ecstatic hug.

"You are a goose, Gretel," remarked Jerry, when he had recovered himself sufficiently to speak. "You are the first person I ever heard of who didn't even know when she had been brave."

"But I wasn't brave," protested Gretel; "I was terribly frightened all the time. Oh, Jerry, it's beautiful to have people say such kind things, but I'm afraid they aren't true, for I really don't deserve them. It wasn't brave to refuse to swear not to tell what that man had said. It was just my plain duty. I am an American, you know."

It was half an hour later. Mr. and Mrs. Douaine had rejoined the young people on the lawn, and they were all having a merry tea together. Gretel looked very happy as she lay back in her steamer-chair, and watched her companions with shining eyes.

"Are you tired, pussy?" her brother asked, anxiously, as he brought her her tea. "You must tell us the moment you begin to feel tired, you know."

"Not one bit," Gretel declared heartily. "Oh, Percy, it's so wonderful to be with you all again, and know that I am safe, and that nothing dreadful is going to happen!"

"You are quite safe," her brother assured her, smiling, "and you are not a bit happier to know it than we are. So drink your tea while it's hot, and try not to think about anything except that the Barlows are here, and we are all going to have some good times together. Hello! here comes Dora with the card-tray. Visitors, I suppose. What a bother."

"I think these must be some people to see you, Gretel," said Mrs. Douaine, glancing at the cards Dora handed her. "Miss Ada Godfrey and Master Archie Davenport. Isn't Ada Godfrey one of the Minton girls?"

"Yes," said Gretel, "and Geraldine said she was coming to Washington, but I didn't

expect to see her so soon. May they come out here, Barbara?"

"Certainly, dear. Show them out, Dora, and bring some fresh tea."

"I didn't know the Davenport boy would come with Ada," remarked Geraldine, looking a little troubled, as Dora tripped away. "He and Jerry weren't very good friends. Now, Jerry, you will behave, won't you?"

Geraldine's tone was pleading, and she looked so grave that Mrs. Douaine inquired in some surprise:

"Why shouldn't Jerry behave?"

"I punched that fellow's head once," explained Jerry, calmly, "but you needn't worry, Geraldine, I sha'n't do it again. I guess he's learned his lesson all right."

The conversation was cut short by the sight of two approaching figures, and Mrs. Douaine rose, and went forward to greet the visitors.

"You have come to see Gretel, I know," she said, holding out her hand in her kind, cordial way. "She will be delighted to see you, but

she isn't very strong yet, so please be just a little careful not to excite her by talking of what has happened. We are trying to keep her from thinking too much about her terrible experience."

"We'll be careful," promised Ada, "and we can only stay a few minutes. Mother and my aunt are waiting for us in the car. We only reached Washington this morning, but we couldn't wait any longer without seeing Gretel."

"Well, here she is," said Gretel's sister-in-law, smiling, and leading the way to the big apple-tree. "She isn't quite as fat as we would like, but she is improving every day. The Barlow twins are here, too; they have come to make us a visit."

The three girls greeted each other heartily, and Ada kissed Gretel with more affection than she had ever shown before. Jerry nodded to Archie in a friendly manner, as though to imply that bygones were bygones, but Archie Davenport did not return the greeting. He was very red, and looked so uncomfortable

and embarrassed, that Jerry suddenly found himself feeling rather sorry for him.

"We are going to be in Washington a week," Ada was explaining, as she held Gretel's hand, and looked anxiously into her pale face. "Mother and Auntie came to see some old friends, and brought Archie and me along. They thought it would be a nice little trip for us before we go back to school. Miss Minton's opens on the first, you know, and Archie is going to Pomfrey. Mother thought we ought to have telephoned before coming to see you, but Archie and I simply couldn't wait. You said you must see Gretel this afternoon, didn't you, Archie?"

Archie had grown redder than ever, but with a mighty effort, he pulled himself together and stepped forward.

"I—I want to apologize," he stammered, holding out his hand to Gretel. "I thought you were a Hun—I mean a German—and I said things I oughtn't to about you, but I made a mistake. You're an American all right, and —and a bully one, too, and—and if you'll

shake hands, and say you forgive me for being such a beast, I'll be terribly glad."

"Well, of all the funny things that ever happened!" ejaculated Jerry, flinging himself at full length on the grass, when the visitors had left. "Who would ever have believed that little cad would have turned out so decent after all! I'm rather sorry I gave him quite such a dressing down, but perhaps it helped to bring him to his senses."

"It wasn't that that did it," said Geraldine; "it was finding out what a mistake he had made about Gretel. But Mrs. Douaine says we are not to talk about disagreeable things to-day, so Gretel and I are going up to her room, and you needn't expect to see us again till dinner-time, because we've got a great deal to say to each other that wouldn't interest a boy at all." And Geraldine twined her arm round her friend's waist, and led her resolutely away to the house.

THE END

DOROTHY BROWN

By NINA RHOADES

Illustrated by Elizabeth Withington Large 12mo

THIS is considerably longer than the other books by this favorite writer, and with a more elaborate plot, but it has the same winsome quality throughout. It introduces the heroine in New York as a little girl of eight, but soon passes over six years and finds her at a select family boarding school in Connecticut. An important part of the story also takes place at the Profile House in the White Mountains. The charm of school-girl friendship is finely brought out, and the kindness of heart, good sense and good taste which find constant expression in the books by Miss Rhoades do not lack for characters to show these best of qualities by their lives. Other less admirable persons of course appear to furnish the alluring mystery, which is not all cleared up until the very last.

"There will be no better book than this to put into the hands of a girl in her teens and none that will be better appreciated by her."—*Kennebec Journal*

MARION'S VACATION

By NINA RHOADES

Illustrated by Bertha G. Davidson 12mo

THIS book is for the older girls, Marion being thirteen. She has for ten years enjoyed a luxurious home in New York with the kind lady who feels that the time has now come for this aristocratic though lovable little miss to know her own nearest kindred, who are humble but most excellent farming people in a pretty Vermont village. Thither Marion is sent for a summer, which proves to be a most important one to her in all its lessons.

"More wholesome reading for half grown girls it would be hard to find; some of the same lessons that proved so helpful in that classic of the last generation 'An Old Fashioned Girl' are brought home to the youthful readers of this sweet and sensible story."—*Milwaukee Free Press.*

For sale by all booksellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO., Boston

BRAVE HEART SERIES

By Adele E. Thompson

Illustrated 12mo Cloth *Net* $1.50 each

Betty Seldon, Patriot

A BOOK that is at the same time fascinating and noble. Historical events are accurately traced leading up to the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, with reunion and happiness for all who deserve it.

Brave Heart Elizabeth

IT is a story of the making of the Ohio frontier, much of it taken from life, and the heroine one of the famous Zane family after which Zanesville, O., takes its name. An accurate, pleasing, and yet at times intensely thrilling picture of the stirring period of border settlement.

A Lassie of the Isles

THIS is the romantic story of Flora Macdonald, the lassie of Skye, who aided in the escape of Charles Stuart, otherwise known as the "Young Pretender."

Polly of the Pines

THE events of the story occur in the years 1775-82. Polly was an orphan living with her mother's family, who were Scotch Highlanders, and for the most part intensely loyal to the Crown. Polly finds the glamor of royal adherence hard to resist, but her heart turns towards the patriots and she does much to aid and encourage them.

American Patty

A Story of 1812

PATTY is a brave, winsome girl of sixteen whose family have settled across the Canadian border and are living in peace and prosperity, and on the best of terms with the neighbors and friendly Indians. All this is suddenly and entirely changed by the breaking out of war, and unwillingness on the part of her father and brother to serve against their native land brings distress and deadly peril.

For sale by all booksellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO., BOSTON

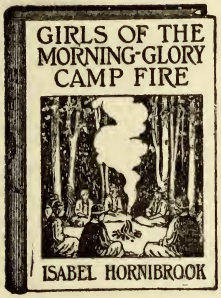
Girls of the Morning-Glory Camp Fire

By ISABEL HORNIBROOK

Author of "Camp and Trail"

Illustrated in two colors by John Goss

12mo Cloth



THE sensibly helpful and patriotic organization called the Camp Fire Girls is spreading with wonderful rapidity because it is based on the right elements to appeal both to girls and their parents. Though having a basis of Camp Fire work, which the author thoroughly understands, this book can be enjoyed by any one. The "Morning-Glory Camp Fire" finds its summer home on one of the most picturesque portions of the New England Coast, and the author's exceptional knowledge of matters connected with the sea adds much interest to the story. A sparkling style, rich humor, and wealth of incident are conspicuous.

"This is a book to be welcomed by those who find much truth in the off-hand statement that it is 'hard to find good reading for growing girls.'"—*Bee, Omaha.*

"The story is entertaining, the characters drawn with naturalness, the incidents both amusing and pertinent. Good reading for girls of the secondary school age."—*Columbus Despatch.*

For sale by all booksellers or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co. Boston

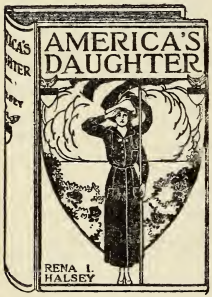
BOOKS BY RENA I. HALSEY

Illustrated Cloth $1.75 each

BLUE ROBIN, THE GIRL PIONEER

NATHALIE PAGE is just such a girl of sixteen as one likes to read about. Obliged to exchange affluence in a large city for a modest home in a small one, she develops into capable young womanhood by becoming a member of The Girl Pioneers of America.

"Any girl of a dozen years or more, or even less, will enjoy this thoroughly, and anyone, young or old, will be the better for having read it." — *Pittsburgh Times-Gazette.*



AMERICA'S DAUGHTER

THIS is an interesting and inspiring story of girls in a select school in Brooklyn who organize a club called "Daughters of America," and under the care of a well-liked teacher take a trip to points on the New England coast made famous in our history. One of the girls has been brought up without knowledge of her own family, and so is called "America's Daughter." In the course of the trip she unravels the mystery of her birth and all ends happily and profitably.

"It is an inspiring story, well told and will be appreciated by girls who love an active, out of doors life."— *Daily Press, Portland, Me.*

THE LIBERTY GIRL

NATHALIE PAGE, seventeen, bright and popular with all her mates, forms a club called the "Liberty Girls" and enthusiastically does her bit to help win the war. A surprising invitation to the White Mountains takes her from organized activity with her companions, but a girl like Nathalie will not be idle wherever she goes, and in carrying out the principles of patriotic service she wins great and deserved credit.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co. Boston

HANDICRAFT FOR HANDY GIRLS

By A. NEELY HALL

Author of "The Boy Craftsman," "Handicraft for Handy Boys," "The Handy Boy"

AND DOROTHY PERKINS

Illustrated with photographs and more than 700 diagrams and working drawings

8vo Cloth Price, $2.50

WITH the aid of an experienced craftswoman, A. Neely Hall, who is in a class by himself as a thoroughly reliable teacher of handicraft, every operation that he describes being first practically worked out by himself, and every working drawing presented being original, new, and actual, has opened the door for the great and constantly increasing number of girls who like to "make things." Such girls see no reason why the joy of mechanical work should be restricted to their brothers, and with this book it need no longer be. The first part of the book is devoted to a great variety of indoor craft that can be followed in autumn and winter, while the second part, "Spring and Summer Handicraft," deals with many attractive forms of outdoor life, including an entire chapter on the activities of "Camp Fire Girls."

"This book will be hailed with delight by all girls who have a mechanical turn."—*Watchman-Examiner.*

"Girls will love just such a book and will find interest for every day of the year in it."—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat.*

"Triumphs of ingenuity never dreamed of are to be found in this volume of handicraft that girls can make, but its chief charm is to be found in the practical value of most of the things to be made."—*Lexington Herald.*

For sale by all booksellers or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co. Boston

JEAN CABOT SERIES

By GERTRUDE FISHER SCOTT

Illustrated by Arthur O. Scott 12mo Cloth

JEAN CABOT AT ASHTON

HERE is the "real thing" in a girl's college story. Older authors can invent situations and supply excellently written general delineations of character, but all lack the vital touch of this work of a bright young recent graduate of a well-known college for women, who has lost none of the enthusiasm felt as a student. Every activity of a popular girl's first year is woven into a narrative, photographic in its description of a life that calls into play most attractive qualities, while at the same time severely testing both character and ability.

JEAN CABOT IN THE BRITISH ISLES

THIS is a college story, although dealing with a summer vacation, and full of college spirit. It begins with a Yale-Harvard boat race at New London, but soon Jean and her room-mate sail for Great Britain under the chaperonage of Miss Hooper, a favorite member of the faculty at Ashton College. Their trip is full of the delight that comes to the traveler first seeing the countries forming "our old home."

JEAN CABOT IN CAP AND GOWN

JEAN CABOT is a superb young woman, physically and mentally, but thoroughly human and thus favored with many warm friendships. Her final year at Ashton College is the culmination of a course in which study, sport and exercise, and social matters have been well balanced.

JEAN CABOT AT THE HOUSE WITH THE BLUE SHUTTERS

SUCH a group as Jean and her most intimate friends could not scatter at once, as do most college companions after graduation, and six of them under the chaperonage of a married older graduate and member of the same sorority spend a most eventful summer in a historic farm-house in Maine.

For sale by all booksellers, or sent postpaid on receipt of price by the publishers

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co. Boston

X 0 3
12-

HV2335 c.1
R
Rhoades, Nina
When Greten was fifteen .

Date Due			